

CANDIDE TO-DAY

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A Tale of our Times
(With apologies to Voltaire)

by

LUCIEN FRANCIS



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CHAPTER I

THE PRINCE DEPARTS

THERE WAS ONCE an Indian Prince who was minded to visit our shores. His Serene Highness, the Prince of Patam Patam, was a mighty and prosperous potentate in his own country. He reigned over an area equivalent to the size of half-a-dozen English Counties and presided over the destinies of four million people. He had a prime minister whom he distrusted and a minister of finance whom he suspected of robbing both himself and his people. His palace, of unexampled splendour, was adorned with all that wealth can buy, and nature can give. The gardens alone extended to over a hundred acres and were embellished with all the horticultural marvels of which the East can be at times so rich. His government was benevolent and his reign was peaceful. For one thing, he was his own foreign secretary and shrewd enough never to interfere with the affairs of neighbouring communities. The members of his court were well paid and their duties well defined. Their remuneration was sufficient to prevent them casting avaricious eyes on the property of his subjects and the Prince knew enough of the arts of government to allocate to each official functions that must never be encroached on by others.

There was one member of his retinue for whom he had a special liking and who was the cause of his long felt desire to visit England. This individual rejoiced in the unromantic name of Smith and was a major in His Majesty's Army. Major Smith played a prominent and important part in the affairs of the principality of Patam Patam. He was rarely seen but his influence was considerable. It was his duty to advise the Prince on questions of policy, and so good was this advice that the Prince trusted him in all matters, even of the utmost delicacy.

Moreover, it was from Major Smith that the Prince had acquired a complete command of our language. But it was not only a fluency with our beautiful tongue, nor advice on policy that the Prince learnt from Major Smith. It was the form in which Major Smith tactfully tendered his advice that so impressed the Prince. If a village required drains or a town a new night club, Major Smith would advise him to do it "in the way we do it in England." If the Course of Justice had to be perverted to suit the Government; if the Stock Markets had to be rigged to suit the Government; if the Press had to be told what not to say to suit the Government; then Major Smith was hastily summoned. If the education of the young was either next door to useless or positively harmful, it was English reformatory methods that Major Smith would introduce. If a woman had to be flogged, a neighbouring potentate's under-secretary's secretary had to be bribed, or a minor official had to be hanged for corruption, it was to Major Smith that the Prince invariably turned for guidance as to the manner in which such things were done in England. On more than one occasion, when the finances were in disorder, Major Smith had been called upon to set them right. No matter what the Prince's difficulties were, Major Smith usually resolved them with tact, deftness, and admirable effect.

It must be admitted that, largely owing to the primitive state of civilization so far attained by the citizens of Patam Patam, Major Smith was frequently called upon to settle problems of political science for which his expensive education, and conventional upbringing, had not entirely fitted him. Be that as it may, he had not done so badly in his capacity as political adviser to the Prince. The ceremonies of the court, the sports and pastimes of his courtiers and his people, certain pleasurable social functions like cocktail parties, or a game of bridge after dinner, were all brought to Patam Patam by Major Smith, and were conducted in the English way to the great satisfaction of all, including His Serene Highness himself. Not even business and agriculture were excluded from the Anglicizing influence of Major Smith. Here, too, as year succeeded year, the Prince had brought home to him the benefits of

English civilization. Major Smith lost no opportunity of impressing on the Prince the happiness that accrues to a people from a well-balanced agriculture, and trade and industry conducted in accordance with the well-tryed principles of English business.

Who can be surprised, therefore, that this intelligent and enlightened Prince, on more than one occasion, evinced a fervent desire to visit the great country from which he had gained so much and seen so little?

He had endeavoured on more than one occasion to visit England. Through the medium of Major Smith his wishes in this respect had been forwarded to the Great Ones in far off Whitehall. Every time he had been politely, but firmly, put off. On one occasion he was told that a general election was pending and as such his presence might be very inconvenient. To his reply that he would very much like to see a general election and self-government in action, the Whitehall officials told him, that by reason of that alone his presence would be even less welcome, as he was himself a quasi-autocrat. On another occasion he was informed that the weather would be most unsuitable at that particular time of the year for one, like himself, brought up in the East. Yet again, he was informed that the Sovereign himself was ill and unable to receive him in a manner befitting his exalted rank.

He appealed to Major Smith to pull the strings and oil the wheels, if necessary, the palms, of the Whitehall machine. But it was all of no avail. Major Smith explained to him that he was only an officer on the War Office General Staff seconded for service in the East. As such he was but a cog in a wheel, a mere link in a chain.

Now this particular point the Prince could never understand. The problem was rendered even more obscure because Major Smith kept on repeating that the arranging of such a visit was clearly not within his special, rather narrow, departmental functions. Such an expedition as the Prince contemplated, Major Smith, explained, would be within the strict purview of the Foreign Office to which the Prince should address his intentions, and explain briefly what he wanted. Having regard to the power and influence wielded by Major Smith in the

Principality of Patam Patam, a power and influence derived directly from the Prince himself, the Prince assumed, quite wrongly, that Major Smith, in his own country, could command anything in a similar fashion.

"I fear you know little either of the outer, or the inner workings of the Whitehall machine," said Major Smith to him one day, as they sat together on one of the balconies of the palace sipping cocktails.

"And what may I ask is the distinction between the outer and the inner workings of this elaborate apparatus of Government which you say is so important?" asked the Prince, eager for knowledge.

"Well," replied Major Smith, "I could not tell you all at once. It is a long and complicated story. A person like yourself, for example, merely sees the public pronouncements of Ministers in which everything appears to be going smoothly and easily. Behind the scenes, where the real work is done or more probably left undone, the situation is quite different. As a matter of fact now I come to think of it," added Major Smith, speaking very seriously and hoping the Prince would not detect his rapid change of subject, "I am inclined to think it would not be the Foreign Office that would deal with this particular point, but rather the Colonial Office. Even that is none too clear. If, as I assume, you intended to travel by sea, bearing in mind your royal rank and long and valued friendship with the British Crown, I imagine you would require a cruiser escort at least. As such, you need hardly be told that the Admiralty would have to be informed and their consent and formal approval of your proposed journey obtained. This might not be forthcoming at this precise juncture. If you wish to travel by air, the Air Ministry would have to be consulted. For a person in your position this would necessitate special weather reports, placing an extra burden on the already overworked Meteorological Staffs at the various stations and aerodromes from here to England. Finally, I take it that you would need money for your sojourn in England. This would require not merely the consent but the active assistance of the Treasury. Funds to a large extent would have to be transferred from here to a bank in England. Various forms would have to be

filled up, and exchange difficulties surmounted, all of which would take time. For all I know, under the latest legislation the Ministry of Health might expect you to supply a medical certificate to the effect that you were wholly free of any disgraceful diseases. This, I believe, applies to everyone now, and is a condition precedent to anyone landing in the country at all. The Ministry of Health is a frightfully fussy body, you know," remarked Major Smith, sipping his cocktail, and then he added, "I have heard it rumoured also, that in the case of a foreigner like yourself, you might be asked to sign a paper saying that you had never had any association with the Communist Party anywhere in the world. Armed with a short note from me stating that you had only recently instructed your local Chief of Police to suppress vigorously all forms of Communism in your own State, this last named difficulty would, I imagine, evaporate into thin air.

"You realize, of course," concluded Major Smith, drawing himself up to his full height, "That if one substantial difficulty was encountered at any stage, that of itself would prevent you going. I venture to think, therefore, that this contemplated expedition of yours to our hospitable and glorious country had better be deferred for a while." So saying, he rose, bowed appropriately, and retired to his own quarters.

Having regard to all the difficulties and formalities that had to be resolved before he could visit England, the Prince was not so sure that the country was either so glorious, or hospitable, as its inhabitants and admirers would have the world believe. None the less, his curiosity was aroused, and he thereupon took a great decision. He would travel to England alone and unheralded, accompanied only by his personal servant. Moreover, he would travel "incognito." This, he contemplated, might well turn out to be a veritable master-stroke of diplomacy. He would be able to go where he liked, untrammelled by officialdom. Into the very by-ways and alleyways of the country would he penetrate, unhindered by anyone. Probably, his very existence would pass unnoticed.

This would suit him admirably. He could study, at leisure, the wonderful country and its wonderful people,

whose distinguishing characteristics he had, as yet, only dimly discerned.

Once his mind was made up he acted, as becoming a born commander, with energy and decision. He sent for his Prime Minister, informed him that he was going away for a while, and that under no circumstances was he to be bothered with State papers or correspondence of any kind. He sent for his Minister of Finance. The Prince was always very much on his guard in receiving this not unimportant person. His opening gambit consisted in peremptorily ordering this functionary to reduce, by one third at least, the tax on soya beans. The Minister of Finance took a poor view of this proposition if only for the practical reason that he, personally, enjoyed a comfortable rake off from this particular tax, and he so informed the Prince. Actually, he did not put it quite so crudely. Instead, he conveyed in delicate tones the information that the revenue from that source was already mortgaged to defray the expenses of His Highness's own ceremonial guard for the coming few months.

"Send the Guard on leave," retorted the Prince. "I shall be away."

The Minister of Finance politely pointed out that the Guard, though on leave, would still have to be paid. The Prince, seeing himself stumped, executed a brilliant strategic retreat by suggesting that the Guard could be put on half pay while on leave.

He quickly followed this up by mentioning the real business he had in view. The Minister of Finance was formally notified that he was to transmit a small sum of money to a bank in London. The name and address of the bank was the same as Major Smith's, the Prince having looked over that gentleman's shoulder one morning when he was writing a cheque. The Prince gave no reason for the movement of these funds. He did, however, indicate in diplomatic language, that his Minister of Finance would probably receive a small commission on this transaction, provided it was carried out secretly and expeditiously.

The Minister of Finance calculated quickly that what he would lose on the reduction of the Soya Beans Tax he would regain on his commission, with possibly a bit extra.

He was, therefore, not at all displeased and the audience terminated with much goodwill and friendliness on both sides.

The Prince thereupon summoned his Minister for Agriculture. This was the only really competent minister the Prince had, simply because he had to be. If this minister failed in his duties, the people—and the Prince himself—starved, a fact which was brought home to the minister himself on more than one occasion, that is, when the people rioted, which they always did if there was no food.

The Prince did not detain him long. On being satisfied that the crops were in a healthy condition and his people had plenty of work, the Prince dismissed this Minister without further ado.

After that, he sent for the chief of his private post office. A matter of some great difficulty, not to say delicacy, had now to be disposed of. Clearly, he would have to notify somebody in London of his intended arrival. Anxiously had the Prince turned over in his mind the question as to who was to be the lucky, or unlucky recipient of this important news. The remarks on this point of Major Smith, to whom he always turned in every predicament, were not very helpful. Moreover, he intended to give Major Smith the slip, so obviously he could not be consulted. Left to his own resources he took the bold decision that he would inform the Prime Minister himself. The telegram he sent was short, and he thought clear. It was as follows: "Shall arrive in a fortnight's time—travelling incognito—Patam Patam. P."

The Prince rubbed his hands with glee. He had taken the plunge and now there was no going back.

He sent another telegram at about the same time. This latter missive was to a shipping company in Bombay booking a passage for himself in a well-known liner under the non-controversial name of 'Brown'. He also requested accommodation for his personal servant. This last named person was sent for hurriedly and told to pack some bags at the same time as the Chief Officer of Posts and Telegraphs in the Principality of Patam Patam departed to carry out his errand.

The Prince paused a moment. This was the first

time he had ever left his State. He strolled through the immense rooms of his magnificent palace and realized that they and the art treasures they contained took on, almost at once, a different significance. He stopped in front of a large window and surveyed the country side, of which he knew every lane and every tree, with an eye different from heretofore. Being not uncultured, he could not help reflecting on the great contrast he would now encounter. The contrast between his own country and the country he was about to visit would no doubt be enormous. One question, and one question alone, was uppermost in his mind. Would he learn anything new of any practical value?

He was thinking of this when his servant tapped him quietly on his shoulder and informed him that all was ready.

He passed Major Smith's quarters without making a sound. He passed his Prime Minister's quarters similarly. That gentleman appeared to be engaged on anything other than the welfare of the Prince's subjects. All the other high and low personages at the Prince's Court were fast asleep.

Quickly, silently, deftly, the Prince sped through the palace to a small door at the back, jumped into a waiting car, and raced to the one and only railway station his community possessed. It was not long before he was travelling through the night to Bombay and England, which he had desired, for many a year, to visit.

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCE'S TELEGRAM

IT MAY BE STATED at once that the Prince's telegram never reached the Prime Minister or even one of his many secretaries. It was received and opened by a comparatively minor underling, who, not understanding its meaning or appreciating its significance, handed it to somebody else. That somebody else handed it to another somebody else, who promptly passed it on still further. In fact, the telegram travelled about, up and down Whitehall for some days. Occasionally it rested for a while on somebody's desk, but not for long; that would involve the risk that the person, on whose desk it was, might have to take action. Eventually, it reached the hands of a comparatively young official who possessed intelligence above the average. He had had a brilliant career at a public school and a university. Moreover, he had passed the Civil Service examination with flying colours. He was generally regarded as a coming man and as one who would go far. He even provoked the jealousy of others, a sure sign of ability. His admirable training for this kind of life at this juncture displayed its value in full and splendid measure. He had no difficulty in translating the word "incognito" which had puzzled so many, and with his broad knowledge of all social questions he quickly grasped the proper interpretation to be put on the letter "P." Furthermore, he had actually heard of the place Patam Patam. He turned over in his mind all these factors in the situation and deduced, with creditable rapidity, the real meaning of the telegram.

He looked into a reference book and discovered that the place Patam Patam had a reigning Prince: obviously, therefore, the telegram was a courteous intimation to the proper authorities, whoever they might be, to the effect

that the Prince, whoever he was, was coming to England on a visit, and wished to remain unknown while here.

In deciphering the telegram he had achieved a triumph, but he was about to achieve another. Having spent a fair amount of time in exploring the veritable rabbit warren of Whitehall and making himself known to many, doubtless with an eye on his own career, he actually knew the appropriate department to which to take this important communication. He moved with speed, the speed of a messenger on whose fleetness the destiny of nations may depend. He forced open doors and set aside secretaries. He even walked, casually and calmly, into the office of the Great Official whom he wanted to see. This Great Official was none other than Sir James Footle, an individual who occupied an exceedingly exalted place in the Civil Service of His Majesty.

Now Footle had entered the Civil Service by competitive examination some thirty years earlier. By patient plodding and the unhappy demise of many around him, he had slowly and methodically worked his way up to a position of no little eminence. He never made a mistake and never did anything notable. He was never in anyone's light, rarely, if ever committed himself to any definite statement, and enjoyed a private life of ultra respectability. His main contribution to this world consisted in an excessive competency. At this stage of his life he had achieved the height of his ambition, which was to advise ministers themselves. Trusted by the highest, mistrusted by the lowest, in the land, he was a perfect ponderous, bureaucrat.

On sight of the telegram that was brought to him he reacted with his usual efficiency. He dismissed the young man promptly, much to the latter's annoyance. He sent for a secretary and informed this personage that a new file would have to be started. The fact that this file as yet contained only one document troubled neither him nor the secretary. The two together would soon fill it up.

Next, he summoned to his office, with dramatic haste, a vast number of other officials, many as eminent as himself. From near and far they buzzed in, like bees round a hive. Very soon a veritable concourse of persons

had assembled, and as if by instinct they settled themselves down into the form of a committee, with Footle in the chair.

Having surveyed the distinguished gathering with pardonable pride, Footle opened the proceedings with a short speech. He conveyed to his hearers the news that a reigning Prince in amity with the Crown, was on his way to this country. The Prince was a highly important person with whom it was most important to keep on friendly terms. Footle was not quite clear what it was the Prince's State exported to this country, but he thought it was flax or soya beans. Both commodities, Footle stressed, were vital to our national economy, though exactly where they came in he did not himself know. The Prince was coming without any warning save the telegram that Footle held up in his hand. The Prince was already on his way and nothing could stop him now, a piece of information that caused the utmost consternation. Lastly, the Prince wished to remain quite incognito while he was here. Inasmuch as no arrangements whatever had been made, and the government itself was quite unaware of the early arrival of this important potentate, Footle called upon his colleagues to decide what to do.

The debate that ensued was animated and at times even acrimonious. Confronted as they were with a situation as awkward as it was unexpected, the assembled hierarchy of Great Officials displayed all their latent talents. It was generally agreed that the position was extremely embarrassing and that someone was to blame for it.

"He cannot have a review or even a guard of honour, turning up like this without giving us proper notice," roared the representative from the War Office. "To start off with, it is contrary to Staff College rules to take us by surprise like this. I call it damn bad form. This Prince fellow—or whatever he is—ought to have been at a Public School, knocked about a bit, and taught some manners." This was the sole contribution to the discussion from that quarter.

"It is all your fault, Footle," said a tall, thin man from the Foreign Office. "You should have kept your hand on the pulse of things out there in Patam Patam."

Footle challenged this statement flatly, pointing out that his responsibilities were exclusively confined to affairs within the United Kingdom.

"What does it mean when this fellow says he will remain 'incognito'?" asked a quiet, fat man, who had hitherto not spoken.

"It means, I presume," said Footle, "that there will be no parties, or receptions, or anything."

"What!" replied the fat man. "We are to get nothing out of it! Then I wash my hands of the whole affair." So saying, he rose from the table and walked out.

"Where is Patam Patam?" asked another man. There was a desperate silence at this. Eventually, Footle hazarded his personal opinion that he thought it was somewhere in India.

"I have never heard of the place, and I know nothing about it," said another individual, adding, "Is it of any importance at all? Which side was it on in the war?"

To this Footle replied that he had not heard of Patam Patam having been on any side in any war.

"We do not even know what this Prince fellow is like," said another man, speaking with an air of authority. "Does he drink? Does he smoke? Has he a wife, or several wives? For all we know he may be coming here in search of a wife. If so, we shall have to act with great circumspection. Not only would questions of high policy arise, but questions of religion, also. The Government must decide that, not I. That is outside the scope of my department entirely." Having said that he too got up and walked out, only too pleased to be quit of the whole affair.

"That is all very well," said Footle, calling the meeting to order, "but we must decide what to do."

More discussion ensued, and after much argument, what was left of the committee did reach a decision. They decided to decide nothing, but to leave it in the able hands of Footle himself, whose long experience in this type of difficulty qualified him better than anyone else to handle the matter. At this, they all got up, and with evident satisfaction at the excellent afternoon's work they had done, marched off to their respective departments.

Left to himself, Footle pondered over the situation. Now Footle was not quite such a fool as he looked. In his own particular way he was equal to any situation. Quite clearly, thought Footle, the Prince would soon arrive. Equally clearly, on arrival, it would be necessary to assign to the Prince a guide or mentor who would carefully shepherd him round, concealing all that was bad and showing him all that was good. In this way, the Prince would carry back with him a highly favourable impression of all that he encountered in England. As such, the friendly relations that had hitherto always existed between His Majesty's Government and the Principality of Patam Patam would be still further cemented, and everything would indeed be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

An initial requirement for this happy state of affairs, however, was the appointment of a suitable guide, mentor and friend for the Prince. Such a person would have to be very carefully selected.

It so happened that such a person existed. Footle not infrequently availed himself of this person's services when matters of great delicacy were involved. This person was none other than Pangloss II, and Footle telephoned for him at once.

Pangloss II did not bear much resemblance to his more famous prototype except in one respect. He was an optimist. It would be more correct to say that he looked on the bright side rather than the dark side of things. He knew quite well that this world was not a perfect place; but he consoled himself with the reflection that its innumerable imperfections might not be altogether inconsistent with the intentions of its Creator.

Pangloss had had a varied career which rendered him not ill-fitted for political responsibilities of a delicate kind. By origin he was, what is colloquially referred to as, a country gentleman. He began life in the Army in the first world war, serving for some years with credit but without distinction. On leaving the Army he was called to the bar and practised for some while. At various times he had amused himself with directorships in the city.

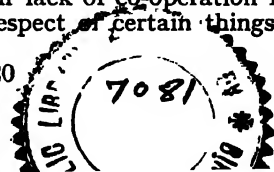
He was a man of the world, familiar with all its

changes of fortune and never depressed in adversity nor unduly elated in prosperity. He was gentleman to his finger-tips, at ease alike with dukes or dustmen. He knew the social strata of our country intimately and could judge men and women of all classes at a glance. He was not ill-read, not uncultured, and possessed excellent taste in wines and cigars ; this latter a valuable social trait in democratic England.

He kept himself remarkably well informed concerning all matters pertaining to the political and financial world. Last, but not least of all, in company with his attractive wife, he was fond of travelling and thus had acquired an international experience of affairs accounted one of his good qualities in Government circles. It is not surprising, therefore, that his services had been frequently requisitioned by the Great Ones in Whitehall whenever tact and discretion of the highest order were needed as they were on this occasion.

Pangloss stood in front of Sir James Footle as though he were a subordinate receiving his last orders for a battle from the commander-in-chief.

"Now, understand quite plainly," said Footle, "there must be no untoward incidents of any kind. All must be smooth and plain sailing. It is largely by reason of your well-known optimistic outlook on life that you have been chosen to look after the Prince while he is here. This fellow has appeared on the scene quite unexpectedly and we know nothing whatever about him. He wishes to remain incognito throughout. As a matter of fact, that suits us because we want no publicity. If the Press started to popularize him, like a born opportunist which I suspect he is, he might ask for a loan or something with which to build public works, schools, or lunatic asylums. Not only are we not encouraging damn nonsense of that kind, but such a loan would require to be negotiated through the medium of the Treasury. Now, it so happens that I am on very bad terms with the Treasury just at the moment. That department has steadfastly refused to agree with me on one or two little matters at issue between us, and in retaliation for their lack of co-operation I have been rather obstructive in respect of certain things upon



which they want help from this department. You see, therefore, that there would be inter-departmental difficulties in the path of such a transaction. Apart altogether from any legitimate political or financial aspects of the matter, a request for a loan would be highly inconvenient at this particular juncture."

"I understand perfectly," said Pangloss.

"You can take him round London and show him the sights. Begin with the Bank of England, the Tower, the Monument, the National Gallery, and all the other well known buildings that people coming from abroad usually visit. I do not know them myself, but I imagine they are interesting. He can see the outside of the Parliament buildings but on no account let him go inside the House of Commons. That would do us no good. I have no objection to his attending a debate in the House of Lords on a non-controversial subject. Be careful that he sees only the right newspapers. 'The Times' and 'The Daily Telegraph' will be enough for him. Of course, he must never pick up 'The Daily Herald' or the 'Daily Worker' under any circumstances. That is perfectly clear, is it not?"

"Absolutely clear," said Pangloss.

"I suppose he had better go to a theatre or two. I have no objection to this, provided it is to a safe, straight play, no matter how dull it is. Incidentally, talking of theatres, you can take him down to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. He is sure to know something of Shakespeare. All foreigners do. I think you had better avoid the revues and music-halls where the girls wear next to nothing. We still have a reputation abroad for respectability and we may as well keep it as long as we can."

"I quite agree," said Pangloss.

"You can round off his tour by taking him to Oxford and Cambridge. Those places do not do much harm." Footle paused a moment thinking whether there were any other innocuous pleasures with which the Prince could be entertained. He came to the conclusion that the above-mentioned programme would be quite sufficient for immediate purposes.

Pangloss asked him if visits to a night club or a few cocktail parties in private houses would be in order.

"I think not," said Footle. "Social functions pure and simple had better be avoided, for a while at any rate. For one thing, they are not always pure or simple, a fact which the Prince, if he possesses even average intelligence, might soon observe. Moreover, he might drink too much himself or see somebody else drink too much; I do not know which would be worse. Of course," he added, "you will report to me in strict confidence from time to time. I shall want to know how things are going."

"Certainly," said Pangloss. "You shall be kept fully informed."

"I need hardly tell you," concluded Footle, "that all your expenscs will be paid. All the same, do not throw the money about too publicly. That might cause trouble. What you do in private does not very much matter."

"Rely on me," said Pangloss, who had Scotch blood in him and in consequence was more than pleased at this last piece of information. "I never throw money about, especially if it is not my own."

With that, Footle dismissed his able lieutenant, completely satisfied that the best possible arrangements had been made to deal with a matter that in his opinion had occupied far more time than it deserved.

He turned to his desk to finish off the day's work. He had in front of him a set of papers that had been giving him a certain amount of trouble. It appeared, from what he could gather, that a very elaborate government sponsored drainage scheme for the town of Barringhurst, in the west country, was doing more harm than good. Through a colossal error on the part of the engineer on the job, the sewage in question had been drained off into the wrong place. Already vast numbers of the inhabitants of Barringhurst were seriously ill with typhoid fever and in fact, several had died. Political questions were involved. The engineer in question was a prominent member of the party in power, and the whole scheme had been started to give work to the unemployed. Sir James Footle was not interested in the right or wrong place into or on to which the sewage should be deposited, still less was he interested

in the fabulous cost of the scheme. He was merely concerned with the appropriate parliamentary reply which his own immediate superior was called upon to give that very week in the House of Commons, loud clamours having been heard from that body upon the whole affair.

As a matter of fact, the House of Lords had even taken it up. The wife of a noble peer living in the neighbourhood had complained of serious stomach troubles. The Government had taken not the smallest notice of the alleged, or purported, disordered condition of the peeress's stomach, but it was a different matter when two members of Parliament had started asking questions. These two M.P.'s, who were both Socialists, had recently visited the neighbourhood. One was inspecting, with a view to purchase, a nice country house and estate; the other was on the look-out for some directorships on local firms. Both had become seriously ill during these visits. One of them had even been violently sick when about to address a public meeting of his supporters. This had brought the matter to a head.

Sir James Footle spread in front of him a map of Barringhurst, hungrily scanning its topographical features for a way of escape. Quick as lightning he espied a new Royal Air Force training camp somewhere in the left hand corner, not too far off the offending deposit of sewage. Moreover, a suspicious-looking red line, clearly a drain-pipe, was seen to be connecting the two places.

He had no difficulty in drafting the necessary ministerial reply which was a model of lucidity and clarity. It was to the effect that, owing to the wholly unforeseeable requirements of the Air Force in the ever-changing conditions of modern war, the cause of all the trouble was traceable to this new camp which had overloaded the existing sewerage facilities, and which could not be erected anywhere else. As such, it was a matter for the Air Ministry to deal with and no other department.

He turned his attention next to an unfortunate speech by a junior minister in a north country town. There was a serious shortage of sugar in that particular area and at a public meeting, in answer to many noisy questions, the junior minister had boldly stated that the deficiency

would be speedily remedied as ample supplies were on the way. That had occurred three weeks' earlier and no sugar had arrived. A public announcement was necessary to exonerate the minister and explain the difficulty.

Footle had to think rather carefully over this. The Press had taken up this matter and he had an innate horror of the Press. He was under no duty to find out where the sugar was, if there was any, nor why it had gone astray if it had, which was obviously what had happened. The last thing to cross his mind was to take active steps to supply the sugar. His sole responsibility consisted in calming public opinion.

He eventually produced a short clear announcement to the effect that the minister's statement was, in point of fact, perfectly correct. Supplies were on the way and would shortly arrive; a slight delay was all that had occurred, owing to the heavy demands of the jamming season, the fruit having ripened earlier than was expected, an eventuality that could not possibly have been foreseen.

He ended his day's work by telephoning round Fleet Street to all the editors of the London newspapers. The wife of a High Court Judge had just given birth to triplets, and he intimated that, at all costs, that must be kept out of the Press.

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCE ARRIVES

AS PANGLOSS WALKED home he contemplated with no little pleasure the prospect in front of him. He had been assigned a task which he liked and in which he judged he would have ample opportunity to display what were in his opinion his varied talents. His wife was not ill pleased either. They both looked forward to a pleasureable dinner party or two at which the Prince would be a guest and at which there would be some interesting conversation.

His optimistic survey of the situation was somewhat shaken when he opened the newspaper the morning after his interview with Sir James Footle. His eye caught an announcement in the Social and Personal columns to the effect that His Serene Highness, The Prince of Patam Patam was due to arrive at Southampton the next day on a private visit. He was much vexed at this and endeavoured to telephone to Sir James Footle but received information to the effect that he was busily engaged at a committee. He was too old a hand at the game not to realize that nothing could be done about it. The damage, if any, had been done, and he hoped for the best.

The next morning found Pangloss comfortably ensconced in a first class carriage travelling from Waterloo to Southampton to meet the Prince.

Now Pangloss prided himself on being something of a tactician, and on the way down he considered with some care the precise manner in which to welcome the Prince. On the whole, he had come to the conclusion that a speech of some sort would have to be made by himself to the Prince. He was not so clear as to whether the speech should be long or short, formal or informal. If the Prince had been tossed about badly in the Channel he would probably not want a speech at all.

Pangloss looked at the weather and saw that it was extremely good. Eventually, he decided on the rough outline of what he regarded as a few introductory remarks with which to greet the Prince, assuming that His Serene Highness was both willing and fit to listen to them. By the time that the first step in his day's journey was coming to an end he was quite satisfied with what he was going to say. He went over it, in his mind, several times. It was entirely non-controversial and, in his opinion, well suited to the occasion.

On arrival at Southampton, Pangloss, being a semi-official person, found everything arranged for him. Sir James Footle's department had evidently been busy. An official conducted him straight to the liner on which the Prince had travelled. At the gangway he was met by an officer of the ship who announced his intention of taking Pangloss to the Prince's private suite at once. Pangloss walked through the ship in a state of mixed elation and nervousness. The moment of meeting had arrived and for the first time he began to wonder what the Prince was really like. At last a door was opened and he entered the Prince's private cabin which was comfortably furnished as a sitting-room.

He saw in front of him a little man, immaculately attired in English clothes. The Prince was about forty years of age and on sight of Pangloss a broad, friendly smile crossed his face. Behind the Prince stood his Indian servant, the sole reminder of the mysterious East from which the Prince had emanated and of which Pangloss himself knew nothing.

"I was told you were coming, and I am delighted to see you," said the Prince. "May I offer you a glass of sherry?"

Pangloss had not hitherto noticed a decanter of sherry and some wine glasses on a small table at the side of the room. He accepted the proffered wine with more than usual relish.

"My friend, Major Smith, warned me," said the Prince, "that it was always a good thing in England to start off with a drink. Is that the custom here?"

"Well, I will not say it is the custom invariably, but it is certainly a good idea," replied Pangloss.

"That is excellent," said the Prince. "Then we will both have a drink." So saying, the Prince helped Pangloss to a second glass of sherry and himself partook of one.

Pangloss was beginning to wonder at what precise moment to fire off his carefully prepared oratorical broadside. That moment had not yet arrived. Actually he had been rather put off his guard by the Prince's informality and easy going manners.

"We have had a most excellent voyage," continued the Prince, "excellent. I have enjoyed every minute of it. There was not one rough day."

"How good that is," said Pangloss, "I am delighted to hear it."

"Yes," added the Prince. "In some ways I am sorry the voyage is over. It has been my first sea trip and it has been a great experience. However, I suppose it is just as well to be in England at last. I have been looking forward to this visit for some years, you know. In fact, I can hardly believe I am really here. I have been given to understand that I am to be in your hands throughout my stay. I can assure you nothing could be better so far as I am concerned."

The opportunity was ideal. Pangloss plunged in.

Drawing himself up to his full height, Pangloss addressed the Prince as follows: "Prince,—for such I shall call you during our association—I bid you a most cordial welcome to the finest country in the world. You will see here a civilization the like of which you have never seen before. It is as near perfection as the artifice of man can devise. At the apex, you will see a government whose qualities of far-sighted leadership and administrative ability provoke the unbounded confidence and stir the intense admiration of us all. The Members of Parliament possess an integrity that is never doubted, and an intelligence that is so far above that of the rest of the community, that it is for that very reason they have been elected to rule over us. You will see a Civil Service that is the pride of our country and the envy of all mankind. The administration of justice, tempered always with mercy, is universally acknowledged to be the best in the world. Education, on which we place so much store, has been

reduced to a fine art. It may not fit everyone for his or her calling in life, but at least it is designed to bring out and develop all that is best in the human race. In the result all our people possess a nice blending of those critical and creative faculties that is the main mark of an educated person. In facilities for conquering disease and maintaining the general health of the community we are far in advance of any other country, and any ailment, however trifling, can be remedied, free of charge, by merely filling in a few forms and transmitting them to a committee. Any number of babies can be safely delivered by the same simple process. In art, learning, sport and culture, we lead the world. Trade, Industry and Agriculture flourish as never before. Fortunate in our climate, protected by wise laws and governed by gifted men, you will see everywhere a happy, smiling, contented and united people. They are well housed, well fed, well clothed. Under these happy conditions, as you can well imagine, the character of our people is second to none, and there is virtually no limit to the heights to which they can rise. You have acted wisely in coming to visit us and, with more confidence than my more famous predecessor, I can assure you that in England at any rate we have attained a degree of civilization in which no real blemish can be found."

Pangloss sat down and helped himself to another glass of sherry.

"That's all very interesting," said the Prince. "I have heard something of the sort before from my friend, Major Smith. Don't you think we had better get into the train that is waiting for us, and I shall be able to see for myself what this wonderful country of yours is like?"

Pangloss was rather abashed at the distinctly practical view that the Prince was taking of the situation. None the less, the Prince's servant was already moving his master's bags, so there was no alternative but to follow them both to the waiting train. Further evidence of the efficiency of Footle's department was forthcoming at once. The Prince was not kept waiting at the customs, nor was he called upon to fill up any of those irritating forms mentioned by Major Smith. Instead, the little party of three was taken at once to the special boat train. They

proceeded to a first class carriage. The Prince lit a cigarette and waited for the train to leave.

At the last moment, a big fat man attired in a black coat and bowler hat, and carrying a brown bag, entered the carriage and occupied a vacant seat. The train started and was soon in the country. Just at that moment the big, fat man opened a newspaper in full view of the Prince and Pangloss. Across the front page, in thick, black type, appeared the words, "TRIPLE MURDER IN SOUTH LONDON. ONE BODY (a WOMAN'S) CUT UP."

Pangloss made frantic signals to the fat man to hide his newspaper, or at any rate to put it out of the view of the Prince. As this was of no avail, Pangloss skilfully diverted the Prince's attention to the beauties of the countryside through which they were passing.

On seeing the rural beauties of England for the first time, the Prince could hardly contain himself for excitement. Little cottages with pretty thatched roofs, neat farm-houses with bellflowered gardens, cows and chickens looking remarkably well, met his gaze in every direction. Everywhere he saw green, green fields, looking fresh and serene in a way he had never seen before. When he glimpsed some thoroughbred horses in a field his joy and pleasure knew no bounds.

Pangloss beamed all over.

"I will take you into the country later," he said. "There I promise you will see something about whose charm and serenity there can be no controversy."

"It is a pity the train travels so fast," said the Prince. "I cannot see nearly enough."

"Our trains are not only the fastest, but the best in the world," said Pangloss.

At that, the fat man put down his paper and almost shouted, "You would not say that if you had to use them every day as I do. They are rarely punctual, the carriages are filthy, the food they serve is a disgrace to a civilized community, and as for the fares, they go up every month."

Pangloss lightly tapped the Prince on the shoulder and moved him into the next carriage.

It was not long before they reached the outskirts of London. Pangloss informed the Prince that he was to

stay at the "Black and White" hotel. A special suite had been engaged for him. The hotel was in the heart and centre of the great city, and was quite one of the most comfortable and luxurious in town. The Prince looked forward to this with evident pleasure.

Eventually the train drew in at Waterloo. The Prince was greatly impressed. He had never seen such a station before. He was not however permitted to wait there long. Pangloss soon hustled him into a taxi and they drove off to the "Black and White" hotel.

On the way the Prince's excitement almost reached fever heat. He had never seen so many buses, cars or people in the streets before in his life. The huge buildings, the brightly lighted shops, the air of general activity, struck him with awe. He began to realize why the English had spread their influence so far and wide. He was desperately anxious to get out, look at the shops, and possibly buy something. Pangloss, however, tactfully but firmly restrained him. After more than one traffic jam, which the Prince found most amusing, the taxi swung into the forecourt of the "Black and White" Hotel, much to Pangloss's relief.

The manager and several liveried porters rushed forward to meet the Prince and dispose of his luggage.

"Everything is ready for you," said the manager, in suave tones. "Everything. Your suite is on the fourth floor, overlooking the river. I will take you up myself."

Pangloss, who was not unaware of the arrangements that had been made, informed the Prince that he would wait for him in the lounge down below. Accordingly, the Prince accompanied by the manager, his own servant and a retinue of other servants, disappeared into a lift.

Pangloss sat down on a comfortable chair and ordered himself a drink which he considered he had well and duly earned. He had not been sitting there for long before the head porter approached him.

"Excuse me, sir," said that personage, "but may I ask if you have anything to do with the Prince of Patam Patam."

"Most certainly I have," replied Pangloss. "Actually

he is in my charge."

"Oh," said the porter, "then perhaps I ought to tell you. Throughout the day we have had innumerable telephone calls for him. The fact is, the Press has been after him. All sorts of newspapers have been ringing up and asking him for an interview. So far, I have managed to put them off, but I believe a journalist is actually on his way here now."

Pangloss looked at the porter as sternly as he could and told him, "His Serene Highness will see no one yet awhile."

If Pangloss thought he had disposed of the porter he was much mistaken. That highly important person, round whom the entire activities of the hotel seemed to revolve, reappeared almost at once. This time he carried a tray on which was a large bundle of letters and correspondence of all kinds. Pangloss looked at that forbidding collection of varied written matter much as a general looks at the enemy.

"What is all that about?" said Pangloss testily

"Correspondence for His Highness," replied the porter. "It began to arrive yesterday morning, within a few hours of the Press announcement that the Prince was arriving. This sort of thing always happens with a celebrity. It is much worse with a film star."

Pangloss gave him a look that would have killed anyone less calm and sedate than the head porter of a London hotel, and told him to leave the tray on the table.

It need hardly be stated that Pangloss glanced at this collection of letters with considerable misgiving. His anxiety was, to some extent, set at rest when he noticed that most of the letters consisted of harmless looking circulars. Even so, he was not quite happy. He asked himself the etiquette on the question. Should he, or should he not, open the letters? The point was an exceedingly delicate one and he reasoned that there might be well-founded arguments either way. He was still undecided when the lift doors opened and the Prince himself appeared.

"My rooms are excellent," said the Prince. "My servant is unpacking, and I have had a wash. Now I am ready for anything, including a drink."

"Certainly," said Pangloss. "That you shall have at once. There is, however, a bundle of letters for you to open. I cannot imagine they are of any importance, but you had better just glance through them."

On sight of this vast array of correspondence the Prince was much surprised. He had given his Prime Minister strict orders that nothing should be forwarded to him.

"They are certainly not from your Prime Minister. I wish they were," said Pangloss.

Whereupon, soothed by a large whisky and soda, and under the eyes of Pangloss, the Prince proceeded to open his correspondence.

The first letter was from a firm of chemists, offering him an infallible cure for constipation. The next was from a medical gentleman, guaranteeing to cure him of excessive alcoholism. A short stay of three weeks' duration, in Surrey, at a special home for delirium tremens, was recommended. After special treatment at this home, in ideal surroundings, a complete and lasting cure was assured. A schedule of the fees, carefully graded in accordance with the social position of the patient, was attached.

Next, the Prince opened some letters from various bookmakers. They offered to take his bets for the forthcoming race meetings, invariably supplying a list of the probable runners. Each bookmaker asserted faithfully that he would always pay, no matter what the odds. After that, the Prince literally waded through an immense number of circulars from tradesmen of all kinds. They offered to sell him literally everything under the sun from costly jewellery and bath towels to the latest and most up-to-date sanitary fittings. Insurance companies wrote to him and offered to insure his life, on special terms. Like the bookmakers, they, too, guaranteed to pay. A curious body of persons calling themselves "The Mile End General Finance Corporation, Ltd.," offered to float companies for him, if he were minded to embark on a commercial career.

After that, he picked up a letter from a bookseller in the West End offering him an entirely new set of pornographic literature at half the usual price. When he came to the letter from a firm in the Midlands propounding a new cure for back ache, he turned to Pangloss and asked him

what sort of country it was upon which he had alighted. To this Pangloss replied that the Prince must understand that England was by tradition, what is known as, a free trade country. The Prince took another drink, and continued.

The next letter was from a firm of speculative solicitors. It was written in guarded tones. It explained that if the Prince was so unfortunate as to fall under a motor bus and unhappily suffer injury, the firm in question would be pleased to act for him. It was intimated that no costs would be incurred, but that any damages recovered could be shared on a fifty-fifty basis.

There were some letters from various money-lenders. These all told the same story; vast sums of money were offered not only at wholly illegal but at quite fantastic rates of interest. In the top corners of these letters were some odd sounding names, after each of which were the words "Russo-Polish" race.

Charities, learned societies, even the governing bodies of public schools, wrote to him and requested permission to put his name on their respective committees.

"What is that for?" said the Prince to Pangloss.

"Oh, it is just important," replied Pangloss.

"What have I to do?" asked the Prince.

"Nothing at all," answered Pangloss.

"How can I be important if I do nothing?" interjected the Prince.

"There are many people like that in England," said Pangloss, quietly.

One letter was very mysterious. The writer intimated that if the Prince was unable to secure any commodity controlled by the Government, be it timber, sand, or whisky, the difficulty could be overcome by the payment of a substantial, but none the less—in the circumstances—not excessive, fee. The writer explained he was in contact with all the government departments and could—But the Prince never finished reading this interesting document. Throwing etiquette to the winds, Pangloss seized this letter and tore it up instantly.

The next letter was from a matrimonial agency. In courteous language it was explained to the Prince that the

ladies of England fell into various sets. There was the hunting set, the political set, the literary set, the drinking set, the self-advertising set, the do-nothing set, the over-dressed and the under-dressed set. There was also the highly respectable set and the not so respectable set. The Prince was requested to convey in diplomatic language from which social set he would prefer his intended wife to be selected. The agency added that it would be pleased to arrange the necessary introduction, and if marriage resulted a commission would be charged. Having regard to the exalted rank of the Prince the commission would be on a slightly higher scale than usual. This commission, the agency felt itself compelled to explain, could not be returned under any circumstances of the marriage were a failure.

There was another letter from a hospital. This hospital was one for venereal diseases, and it suggested that the Prince might like to open a new wing and deliver the inaugural speech.

Certain organs of the Press communicated with him. An enterprising editor asked for a series of articles entitled, "Harem Life in Democratic Days." The editor took pains to point out that the literary value, and the political interest of the story would be much enhanced if the Prince could supply descriptions, and if possible photographs, of the more favoured ladies with which the harem was adorned. Another editor inquired, if not for some articles, at least for an interview. This editor explained that he was quite aware of the progressive, up-to-date, and strictly constitutional régime of His Highness, but ventured to remind the Prince that such had not always been the case in the Principality of Patam Patam. The Prince's father and grandfather had been notorious autocrats, and if the Prince could cast his mind back for a few years the paper in question would like to entertain its readers with some vivid accounts of "vice in Old Patam Patam." The editor added that the Prince's own very creditable efforts in the way of reform and general public enlightenment on these matters could be suitably mentioned.

The Prince had long since passed this stage and evinced his displeasure in no uncertain language. Pangloss

tried gallantly to defend this on the simple ground that the Press was entirely free in England.

"The Press can say what it likes," remarked Pangloss, "no matter whether others like it or not. They tell everyone what to do and what to say. The Press, in its own estimation, runs the life of the entire country."

Charities of all kinds wrote to the Prince and asked him for subscriptions. Amongst other things, he was invited to open a Baby Show, judge a Beauty Contest, and to take an interest in an ex-Convicts' Aid Society. One charitable organization informed him that it would be most grateful for any unwanted false teeth. Another organization, calling itself the "Cure Yourself at Home Company, Ltd." offered to cure the Prince of breathing difficulties, stammering, or inferiority complex.

Now it must not be for one moment supposed that Pangloss looked upon this correspondence with anything other than ever increasing disquiet. His disquiet became something like panic when he espied half-way down the pile a long, thin, buff-coloured envelope, across the top of which he saw the familiar words "On His Majesty's Service" in black type. A cold shiver ran down his whole frame. What government department was daring to communicate with the Prince? Notwithstanding all Sir James Footle's skilful and thorough precautions had some inaccountable mistake been made? His panic became nearly uncontrollable when he saw in the outside corner of the envelope the ominous words, "Revenue Department. Taxation." Pangloss waited for the blow to fall. He had not long to wait. The Prince opened the letter and pulled out a demand for income tax. There was also a covering note. This explained that the Prince, in addition to setting out his income from all sources was required to account for certain other monetary receipts. His Highness, so the letter read, was believed to be Colonel-in-Chief of the Patam Light Horse. All pay and allowances from this source would have to be included. Moreover, the Prince was an Honorary Commodore of the Royal Air Force. (Some squadrons of the Royal Air Force had in fact visited Patam Patam twelve months previously and in return for much hospitality there had been conferred on him the

complimentary rank of Air Commodore). The fact that he had never flown an aeroplane in his life was of no importance. All pay and allowances from this quarter would also be subject to tax. There were references to his wife's income, and to children, together with aggressive demands for all sorts of personal details. He had as yet no wife or children, and he looked at the huge form in mingled rage and amazement.* He was threatened with fines and even imprisonment for any false statement or failure to make a full return of all his income.

"I protest," shouted the Prince. "I protest. Is this the way to treat me? I have only been in the country a few hours and I receive a demand for income tax. How do you get over this, Pangloss? Is this in accordance with your free trade principles?"

"I must say I am very sorry," said Pangloss. "Quite clearly some unfortunate mistake has been made. Do not be unduly worried about it. I will settle it almost at once." So saying, Pangloss picked up the letter and asked the Prince to excuse him for a minute or two while he went to the telephone.

Needless to say, Pangloss was literally furious at this shocking blow to all his and Sir James Footle's carefully prepared plans for the quiet and orderly reception of the Prince. He had only one idea in his head, namely to ring up Sir James Footle at once and ask for his guidance in this unexpected difficulty. Accordingly, he proceeded to a telephone box in the corner of the lounge and endeavoured to get into touch with that important person.

Now it happened that Sir James Footle was at that precise moment presiding over one of his congenial *recherché* dinner parties in his private house. A quite formidable array of high Civil Servants and their wives, some with handles to their names, were assembled round Footle's table availing themselves of his hospitality. These dinner parties were well known in Civil Service circles and invitations thereto much valued. Assisted by a rather bourgeois wife whose cooking was admirable, and fortified by the contents of a wine cellar of which he was very proud, Sir James Footle enjoyed these functions and was much annoyed when his butler softly informed him that he

was wanted on the telephone. As a matter of fact, he was busily engaged with some roast duck and green peas aided by some vintage claret. As such he evinced considerable reluctance to leave the table. When, however, his butler whispered into his ear the name of the caller, Footle felt himself compelled to move. Actually, apart from the gastronomic delicacies he was temporarily leaving, it was no bad thing for his professional prestige to be summoned to the telephone, and his wife promptly exploited the situation.

"James rarely has any peace, you know, even when he is here," she informed the assembled company. "He is always being called on the telephone. At times of crisis the office practically never leaves him alone at all."

This remark was greeted with general approbation and Sir James Footle departed with something like an aurora of glory round his head, everyone realizing what an extremely busy and important person he was. This of itself proportionately increased the importance of the guests themselves.

At long last contact was established between Sir James Footle and Pangloss, and the conversation was as follows :

Pangloss : Is that you, Footle ?

Footle : Yes it is. Hurry up, I am in the midst of my dinner. What do you want ?

Pangloss : Well, something frightful has happened. The Prince has arrived and is comfortably installed at the "Black and White" from where I am now telephoning. Unfortunately along with a lot of letters and circulars some fool has actually sent him a demand for income tax.

Footle : What ! I can't believe it.

Pangloss : It is true. What I want to know is what I am to do about it.

Footle : I don't know. I am in the midst of my dinner. I will see to it in my office, tomorrow morning.

Pangloss : You can't do that. We must do something now, or at least tell the Prince something. He is positively enraged."

This aspect of the matter had a noticeable effect on Sir James Footle who began to think quickly. After

some delay he enquired of Pangloss if there were any reference in the letter by which the particular department from which it originated could be identified. Pangloss told him there was a reference and read it out to him. It was "FX/184/C/R/291/BTO/YM." Footle heard the magic letters "BTO" and expressed his opinion that this might be a misprint for B.O.T. which would stand for the Board of Trade.

Pangloss replied that this might be so, but he did not see how it helped them. By this time, Footle had had quite enough of the conversation, and told Pangloss that as he was taking the Prince round Whitehall in the morning he could take him, amongst other things, to the Board of Trade and settle the matter himself. He emphasized that income tax had nothing to do with his department in any event, and the conversation came to an abrupt, if somewhat unfruitful end. Footle rejoined his guests, and continued to attack his duck and peas, highly delighted with himself at having settled an awkward little point so satisfactorily.

At the other end, in the hotel lounge, Pangloss was not so happy. He had, however, been supplied with one way out of the difficulty. He approached the Prince with a smile.

"I think," said Pangloss, "we can deal with this little matter quite easily. It will be all over in half an hour. I have just been speaking to a very high official who not only wishes me to apologize to you for this unfortunate incident but has put forward a most practical suggestion for its disposal. As you know, I am taking you round some of the Government offices, probably to-morrow morning, and we will call personally on the writer of this letter and the whole incident will be finished with and forgotten in no time. Of course a mistake has been made by some over-zealous functionary in a quite minor position, and we will rectify it without any difficulty."

With that, Pangloss suggested that they might enter the hotel restaurant and dine.

Dine they did, and most pleasurably. Pangloss's excellent taste in food and wines was much appreciated by the Prince. They talked of many things and a warm

friendship grew up between the two men. Eventually the time arrived for Pangloss to depart to his own home and for the Prince to retire to his room. Pangloss wished him good-night, and promised faithfully to be with him by not later than ten o'clock in the morning, adding that he would most certainly show him Whitehall, and some, at any rate, of the government departments.

The Prince went to his room. As he went off to sleep he had the consoling reflection that on the morrow he would see for himself part, at any rate, of the great machinery of government by which His Britannic Majesty exercised sway and influence over so large a part of the civilized and uncivilized globe.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCE VISITS THE WHITEHALL CIRCUS

JUST AFTER TEN O'CLOCK in the morning Pangloss bounced into the hotel lounge. The Prince was waiting for him, and Pangloss noticed with much pleasure that he was reading an eminently respectable newspaper. After the usual morning greetings of great affability on both sides, the Prince was informed that he was to be taken, then and there, to Whitehall, and at some stage of his peregrination in that neighbourhood the regrettable little matter of the income tax demand would be disposed of for good and all.

The distance was not far and they decided to walk. On the way there he was greatly interested in all that he saw. Pangloss, however, watched him carefully and took good care to see that everything appeared to the Prince in the most favourable light.

Just as they reached the statue of Charles the First at the head of Whitehall, Pangloss paused a moment and said to him, "I have been thinking over this matter and it is clear to me that the first thing to clear up is this silly income tax demand in respect of your Colonelcy of the Patam Light Horse. Quite obviously there is something wrong there."

"Of course there is," said the Prince. "I have never received a penny piece in pay from that quarter at any time."

"Exactly," said Pangloss. "That being so we will call first on the War Office. I have a great friend there. I have already spoken to him on the telephone this morning, and he will be delighted to see us. He is an officer on the War Office general staff and if you keep your eyes open you may be lucky enough to see that body in action. They can, and they do, move millions of men from one side of Europe to the other without a hitch."

Pangloss stopped both his walk and his remarks. The great street of Whitehall, to him the greatest in Europe, was in front of him, and he bade the Prince survey for a moment one of the wonder spots of this world. Not unbeautiful it looked, bathed in spring sunshine.

"It is a marvellous thing," said Pangloss, indicating the government buildings and Parliament in the distance, "in this comparatively limited space there is concentrated all the best brains in the world. No emergency is too great for them, no situation too difficult . . ." He was about to make a long speech but fortunately, or unfortunately, the speech proceeded no further by reason of the attention of a motor bus which skidded badly and nearly knocked them both over. The Prince suggested that they had better move on, which they did. Pangloss was visibly annoyed at his eloquence having been interrupted.

After walking a few steps they arrived at the War Office. Pangloss guided his distinguished guest to a large courtyard at the back. On entering the building, the Prince noticed a vast concourse of persons running about in all directions, carrying papers and evidently very busy. Some were in uniform and some were not. Pangloss captured the attentions of an individual calling himself a messenger. This latter personage politely asked both of his visitors to fill up a small form and sign their names in a book. While this was happening he grabbed a telephone and started to talk to somebody else in the building announcing the arrival of the Prince and Pangloss.

"He is speaking to Captain Rake," said Pangloss.

"Who is he?" asked the Prince.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said Pangloss. "He is the man we are going to see. His full name is Captain Hugh de Launcelot Fitzrake-Rake Rake. We call him 'Rake.' I know him very well." After some delay the messenger came forward and offered to conduct them to Captain Rake's office which, he explained, was on the fourth floor.

Thereupon, the small party of three moved down a series of very long corridors towards a lift. All the way along these apparently interminable corridors the Prince observed officers in uniform assembled in little groups of

twos and threes chatting to one another. They all appeared to be in high spirits and there was much laughing and joking. The lift, which was eventually reached, proceeded in its upward course at a desperately slow pace. At the first floor the lift stopped and two officers walked in, engaged in a most animated conversation with one another.

"Have you looked at those papers I sent over to you the other day?" said one of them.

"No," replied his companion, "When is the conference on them?"

"On Wednesday morning next, I think," said the first officer.

"What?" said the second officer, in astonishment, "I shall not be ready by then. Put it off for a week, old boy."

"Certainly," said the first officer.

At that moment the lift reached the second floor and stopped. One of the officers got out and two more got in. The conversation became quite animated. One of them, a major, appeared excessively angry.

"Scandalous, I call it. Positively scandalous," he almost shouted. "Well, you know how he has got the job, don't you?" replied one of the others.

"No. I do not. And what's more, I should very much like to know," said the major.

"I can tell you," went on the other officer. "He is friendly with the General. They hunt together with the East Clerkenwell."

At that moment the lift stopped again and they all got out, including the major, still fuming. Two more officers moved in. As far as the Prince could gather, this conversation, carried on in undertones by the two officers, was about some serious matter. He overheard a reference to the new ceremonial head-dress for the Parachute Corps. Then, the conversation appeared to change suddenly, and one of the officers was heard to enquire about the new rates of pay for Army Chaplains. There were some inaudible remarks and then he heard one of them say "Are the Jewish Rabbis paid?" To which his companion replied, "Of course they are; they're not in the Service for nothing."

At this moment the lift stopped again and another, quite young, officer stepped in, who was obviously known to, and on very friendly terms with them both. This new arrival was evidently giving a cocktail party that evening and invited his two friends to come, adding that somebody referred to as "Old George" had just come back from leave and had brought with him a recipe for a new and exceedingly potent cocktail, adequate supplies of which would be available at the forthcoming party. This created much merriment, and they all evinced no little pleasure at the prospect of tasting "Old George's" cocktail. The lift at long last reached the fourth floor and everyone got out. As the three officers dispersed the Prince overheard them agreeing to meet again that morning for lunch at some club whose name he did not catch.

After walking along another corridor they were shown into Captain Rake's office, and the messenger disappeared silently. Captain Rake's office consisted of a large room. On either side were doors leading out to similar rooms from which were heard sounds of great activity as though their occupants were always on the move. Telephones ringing and typewriters tapping could be heard in all directions. Captain Rake himself was sitting at an enormous table on which there were masses of papers. On the entry of the Prince and Pangloss he rose and greeted the latter with great friendliness. They had evidently known one another for some considerable time. The Prince was introduced and they all sat down.

"You rang up half-an-hour ago, did you not?" said Captain Rake to Pangloss.

"I did," replied Pangloss. "There is a little matter on which I would be grateful for your help."

"By all means," said Captain Rake. "What can I do for you?"

"As a matter of fact," went on Pangloss, "the position is this. His Highness is paying his first visit to England, and I have the honour and pleasure of acting as his host throughout his stay here, which is quite private and unofficial. Most unfortunately and through a little error on the part of somebody the Prince has had sent to him a demand for income tax. It is not entirely clear from

which government department this demand has come, but there is a reference to the Prince's pay and allowances as Colonel-in-Chief of the Patam Light Horse. The whole thing is a lamentable mistake from beginning to end, and we have really called to ask you to take, if possible, the necessary steps to cancel the whole matter, which ought never to have occurred." So saying, Pangloss handed to Captain Rake the offending form and letter.

Captain Rake looked at the letter for some time. The Patam Light Horse struck him as being an interesting body of men, although he had not previously heard of it. The pause in the conversation was in fact so long that Pangloss hastened to add that the Prince had never received any pay at all from his appointment, which was quite honorary.

Captain Rake was clearly much bewildered at the whole state of affairs, and after further delay he said, "As a matter of fact, we do not deal with income tax here. I think you had better go to the Army Pay Corps department. It is in another part of this building and if you would not mind waiting a few minutes, I will take you there myself."

He had no sooner said this than a not unattractive lady secretary walked in from an adjoining room, carrying an armful of papers. These she deposited on Captain Rake's desk and proceeded to seat herself in a vacant chair, producing at the same time a pencil and a notebook.

Captain Rake looked at his morning's work and said to his two visitors, "Excuse me a minute. I'll get through this pretty quickly."

Pangloss nudged the Prince and they both waited in respectful silence while Captain Rake addressed himself to the pile of papers in front of him, discussing their contents with his secretary, to whom he gave the appropriate instructions.

"Nighties!" he almost shouted, picking up the first papers. "What the devil have I got to do with them?"

The lady secretary politely pointed out that the indent he held in his hand referred to a new issue of Service nightdresses to be issued to the A.T.S. somewhere in Yorkshire. He passed that over to an officer in the next

room who was a noted lady killer. He then picked up a formidable looking document, which was no more than the return of an infantry battalion sailing that day for Gibraltar. It was his duty to read this document, initial it, tie it up with tape and lock it in a file. He ran his eye over it quickly and saw that the regimental sergeant-major had not been vaccinated. He grabbed a telephone and began telephoning all round the War Office, loudly demanding an explanation for such a shocking irregularity. After threatening to stop the battalion sailing, he pontifically informed his secretary that he would refuse to initial it, and sent the whole file back to the regimental depot, with the appropriate minute in red ink.

The next matter that called for his attention was a report of an alleged incident between an other rank and a W.A.A.F., somewhere in Bedfordshire. He glanced at the account of what was supposed to have occurred and immediately passed it over to the Air Ministry. The next item of business referred to a vulgar song which a certain corporal was said to have sung at a regimental concert somewhere in the Aldershot area. The local Press had got hold of it, and he saw in the file a copy of the local newspaper with the heading, "WHAT THE ARMY DOES TO OUR YOUNG BOYS." The editor had published some of the verses, the first of which he read. It was something about a lady in a bath. The bath was so small and the lady so tall, that at any moment she could only wash in half. He saw nothing either vulgar or funny in that, though it crossed his mind that it had possibilities. He passed it over to the Public Relations department, whose officers could read the other verses.

The next set of papers was very bulky and gave him no end of trouble. Somewhere on the South Coast a boat load of French fishermen or smugglers had lost their way in a fog and drifted up an estuary where there was a camp of British troops. The sentry on duty had challenged the Frenchmen who, instead of answering in a way the sentry could understand, replied in their own language, accompanied by much wild gesticulation. Whereupon the sentry let off a few rounds, which had hurt nobody but which had roused the camp. The Frenchmen were at that

moment in the guard room and the commanding officer of the camp had written to the War Office for instructions. Captain Rake adopted his well-tried and infallible tactics of telephoning all round, and, having discovered that the river at that particular spot was tidal, he passed the whole file over to the Admiralty.

The next item of business was a censored letter from a soldier in the Middle East. The writer, in somewhat blunt language, conveyed the unmistakable impression that a certain highly unpopular officer was thought to be living with a woman not his wife. The woman in question was believed to be a Russian. Captain Rake promptly passed that over to the Security Service.

Captain Rake paused a moment and lit a cigarette.

"I shall not keep you much longer," he said to the Prince and Pangloss. "You have no idea of the number of things I have to deal with. Here for example is a troublesome affair," he went on, as he picked up some more papers. "Here is a letter from a farmer in Devonshire. He says a tank got out of control in a country lane and drove into a field just as a cow was calving, with much injury to both cow and calf. He wants compensation, as the calf died as a result of it --at least, so he says. I call it not unreasonable to ask for compensation. Moreover, I like farmers. But what am I to do?" he added.

The Prince and Pangloss remained discreetly silent, so Captain Rake appealed to his secretary. A hurried conversation took place between the two at which a difference of opinion occurred. The secretary was of the opinion that the matter should be passed on to the Mechanical Warfare department for a report on the state of the tank; but Captain Rake thought it should go to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for a report on the state of the cow and the calf. The Ministry of Agriculture won the race.

"After all," said Captain Rake, "it might not have been a cow, it might have been a horse; besides, we must know the calf really is dead before we do anything."

To the Ministry of Agriculture, accordingly, went that set of papers. After that, he disposed of what he described as one or two more or less trifling matters. One unit in the

London area was asking for more cooks. He passed that over to the Army Cobkery department. The adjutant of Anti-Aircraft Brigade in Essex had written complaining of a shortage of boots and an insufficiency of ground sheets. These requests were passed over to the Army Clothing department. There was then the report of a court of inquiry on some bully beef that had gone bad at a camp in Scotland. Several officers and men had been seriously poisoned and some intelligent person had kicked up quite a row about it. He informed his secretary that the Royal Army Medical Corps could be called on for a report, before any action was taken. His secretary, however, demurred at this and drew his attention to a note from the Colonel of the battalion in question. The Colonel in angry tones and in his own handwriting said that the cause of all the trouble was damn bad staff work on the part of a lot of young fellows down at the War Office, half of whom could not even slope arms. The Colonel added that if his men did not get proper food and plenty of it in thundering quick time he would come down to the War Office himself and shoot them all up with his own revolver and to hell with the consequences. Captain Rake was absolutely furious when he saw this, "What!" he roared, "What does he think we are? Does he think we are a catering establishment, Lyons or something? This Colonel fellow seems to think we are here to get things done at once; the sooner he is disillusioned the better," "It is all right," interjected the secretary soothingly, "Without a War Office pass he could not get into the building." Observing that the irate Colonel's threat was a military manoeuvre physically incapable of achievement he calmed down considerably. "Send the papers over to the Army Catering Department," he said, "and add with my compliments that the whole matter can wait until I return from leave which will be in about three weeks' time. That will teach this Colonel the way we do things here." The secretary endorsed the papers accordingly and the two of them proceeded to further business.

Next, there was put in front of him a variety of pamphlets and brochures from the Army Bureau of Education. He looked at these with more than usual

mistrust. The first was entitled, "Learn Shorthand between Parades." Then there was a pamphlet entitled, "Brush up your Portuguese." After that, he encountered a document inviting all ranks to "practise elocution and become a political speaker." Captain Rake was required to read these notable contributions to military science, order them in large numbers from the printers, and distribute them to the troops. Now, it so happened that he had no very high opinion of education, having himself had the best that money can buy, so he sent them all back to the place from whence they had come, namely, the Army Bureau of Education. A pamphlet headed "Study Yiddish, and embrace a Commercial Career" he consigned to the waste-paper basket.

His attractive female secretary at that moment handed him what she called "a mixed collection of not very important matters."

"What are they all about?" asked Captain Rake.

"Well," answered the secretary, "the Guards want some wash basins; some Territorial Units, toothbrushes; and there is a Mechanized Cavalry Regiment down at Aldershot, who want something or other—spanners, I think; or, it may be some polish for the officers' boots. No, it's neither of those things," she added, looking at the file again. "The adjutant says he wants a bundle of Army Forms on an immense variety of subjects, from "Innocation against Smallpox," to "Dress Regulations while on Leave."

"They can all wait," retorted Captain Rake. "Is there anything else?" he added.

"As a matter of fact, there is," answered his secretary, in rather grave tones. Whereupon, there was placed in front of Captain Rake a large file, the main feature of which was a report on what the secretary described as "a very serious matter indeed." Apparently, this mechanized cavalry unit had recently enjoyed the great pleasure of a general inspection. The General, in the course of his peregrinations, had unearthed a company cook who had not shaved. Whereupon, the General, in an appropriate passion for cleanliness, had ordered everyone in the cook-house to take off his clothes, then and there. On this

order being executed, the General had pounced, with childish glee, on a man wearing non-service pants. The man's explanation was that he could not wear ordinary service pants because he suffered from warts—many of which he had evidently exhibited. The General had taken a very poor view of this excuse, and had sent in to the War Office a long report of the whole affair. This report had wandered about the War Office from desk to desk, for the information and necessary action on the part of the general staff. It had occupied a lot of time, and had had quite a long journey, nobody knowing what action to take. It now came to rest for a while in front of Captain Rake. He looked at this report with much annoyance.

"If the man was improperly dressed on parade," he said to his secretary, "he ought to have been dealt with regimentally—or, we can send the papers over to the Judge Advocate General's department for a Court Martial."

"But he wasn't dressed he was undressed," his secretary reminded him.

"That does make a difference, it is true," answered Captain Rake.

"I wonder if he was a good-looking man, with nothing on," enquired the secretary, demurely.

"That doesn't matter a damn," rapped out Captain Rake, who was clearly in no mood for love, or humour, overwhelmed with work as he was. "Even so, it is a delicate point, I admit," he added, thinking heavily.

Having paused for a minute, he decided he needed further advice on this doubtful question, and proceeded to call in various other officers from adjoining rooms. About half-a-dozen officers, including a subaltern in the Guards, answered this call, and marched into Captain Rake's office.

"Now, look here, Fitzclarence," said Captain Rake to the Guards' subaltern. "You know all about ceremonial matters. What is the position of a fellow undressed on parade, in the presence of a General?"

"But he is not undressed—or should not be—if a General is on parade," replied the subaltern, in courteous tones.

"But he was undressed," answered Captain Rake. "The report says so."

"He cannot have been," answered the subaltern. "If a General was on parade he was dressed, though he may have been undressed."

"How can a man be dressed, undressed?" roared Captain Rake. "Don't you see, he had all his clothes off?"

"None the less, he would be dressed," added the subaltern, with a courage worthy of the fine body of military men of which he was a member.

At this moment, a short, fat Major, who had hitherto said nothing, put his hand on Captain Rake's shoulder with the air of an elder brother trying to help his junior out of a difficulty.

"Take my advice, old boy," said the fat major, "Pass a chit to this General telling him to lay off undressing fellows on parade. One morning, if he suffers from a bit of a hang over, he will start undressing a whole lot of A.T.S. on parade, and then there will be a row."

"That would start questions in the House of Commons, you know," interjected a tall captain.

The mention of the House of Commons acted like an electric shock to the assembled company of officers. One and all agreed that an eventuality of that kind must be avoided at all costs.

"If the M.P's started asking questions about the War Office," pointed out the fat major, "it might be the end of the War Office altogether."

"I quite agree," said Captain Rake. Whereupon he turned to his secretary and remarked, "Send the papers back for more information both about the warts and the pants he was wearing. We can always do that if we are in a difficulty."

This somewhat technical, and extremely awkward point having been settled to the satisfaction of all concerned, the officers dispersed to their various rooms.

Finally, there were the particulars of an obscure person who might be a suitable recruit for the Intelligence Corps because he spoke Ruthenian.

"What is 'Ruthenian'?" thundered Captain Rake to his secretary. "Is there such a place? I have never heard of it!"

The secretary professed complete ignorance of the whereabouts of Ruthenia, and admitted that it was the first time she had ever heard of it.

By that time, Captain Rake had had enough for one morning so he told his secretary to acknowledge the receipt of the papers, and to leave them on, or in, the file.

"We are not going to war with that country yet awhile I presume. For one thing, we have had no official notice through the usual channels," he added.

The secretary entirely agreed with this remark and departed as gracefully as she had come in. Whereupon Captain Rake put on his hat and coat and intimated to the Prince and Pangloss that he would take them round to the Army Pay Corps Office if they would be kind enough to follow him.

The three of them wandered about the big building for some time until they were deposited in front of another person before whom the question of the Prince's income tax was placed. Captain Rake left them at this stage with much cordiality, and expressions of regret that he could do no more. After that he strolled down for an early lunch at his club, where he doubtless informed his friends what an extremely busy morning he had had at the War Office.

The individual before whom the Prince and Pangloss now stood took one, and only one, glance at the letter. With a most disarming smile he said, "I am afraid we can do nothing for you here. This is clearly a matter for the Treasury. If you will just step across the road to that building you can see from this very window, they will deal with it for you there, I am sure." So saying, he ushered our two friends out of his office.

The Prince and Pangloss accordingly proceeded to leave the War Office and eventually found themselves in the street below. As they walked over to this other building the Prince turned to Pangloss and asked him a question.

"Pangloss," he said quietly, "do I understand that some of these officers are sent to a Staff College to learn strategy?"

"Certainly," replied Pangloss. "Our Staff College is the best in the world."

"I call that quite unnecessary," commented the Prince. "One sort of strategy they seem to learn better in this building than anywhere else. In the art of evasive tactics, I imagine, they put some of the great Masters to shame. Grouchy, after Waterloo; Barclay de Tolly, skilfully eluding Napoleon at Vilna; or the famous Roman General who gave his name to the tactics known as Fabian, are but amateurs compared to these fellows. I have not seen masses of men moved from one side of Europe to the other; all I have seen, so far, is masses of papers moved from one desk to another."

Pangloss took a somewhat sad view of this observation but could make no reply because by that time they had reached the outer doors of their next port of call. On arrival at the Treasury they were received by a nasty little man who was obviously unaware of his visitors' importance. "You must pay your income tax," he snapped. "Otherwise you are a defaulter."

"But I am not a defaulter--not yet awhile," pleaded the Prince.

"You will be, if you don't pay your income tax," answered the little man.

"Excuse me," intervened Pangloss, "but I fear you misapprehend the position."

"Oh, no, I don't," replied the little man. "You want to avoid paying income tax which you can't do because I am here to get it in."

"I really must protest," said Pangloss. "This gentleman is the reigning Prince of an Independent State, and the Income Tax Demand has clearly been sent to him in error." At that, the little man quietened down, picked up the letter and form, and disappeared through a nearby door. There was a considerable pause during which the Prince remarked that the authorities seemed very determined to grab all the taxes they could. Pangloss had to tell him that such was the case, to which the Prince delicately inquired whether such a procedure was altogether democratic, when the little man, together with another official, reappeared. This other man was short and fat, and quite jovial. Both of them, in fact, appeared suddenly polite. The fat man did the talking.

"I am afraid we cannot help you here," he said. "This is a matter for the Colonial Office. I have an eminent and distinguished colleague there to whom I have just spoken on the telephone. You will find him on the second floor, in room number one hundred and eight. We are merely collectors of taxes here. We do nothing else. A case of this nature is clearly for the Colonial Office."

Thereupon, the two men, with studied courtesy, directed the Prince and Pangloss to a large building on the other side of the road.

On reaching the Colonial Office they met with a reception that was not only positively inhospitable, but actively hostile. Inside room one hundred and eight was an enormous man, sitting at a large table covered with papers of all kinds, and surrounded by the inevitable secretaries and telephones.

"We know nothing of Patam Patam at all," said this man. "We have no records of it. A place of which we have no records at all is not within the purview of this department. I must really make it quite clear that we can do nothing for you at all. Moreover, we are exceedingly busy just at the moment," he added, looking pointedly at his papers and his secretaries. The latter bowed obediently. He shuffled some of his papers, took a pen in his hand, and turned to Pangloss.

"Your best course is to go to the Foreign Office," he concluded. "This is clearly a matter for that department to straighten out."

The Prince and Pangloss accordingly departed and made their way to the Foreign Office. On hearing of their next port of call the Prince's interest was much stimulated. He was his own foreign secretary and a highly successful one too. He had had considerable experience in this branch of political science, and having always regarded British diplomacy with much respect, not to say awe, the prospect of visiting its headquarters was one that filled him with pleasure.

On reaching the famous building the usual palaver occurred. Messengers dashed about and telephones were much in evidence. Every now and again a messenger

came up and informed them that " Sir Henry will see you in a minute."

The minutes went by, but still our two friends were kept waiting. At last a messenger appeared and said, " Sir Henry will see you at once."

Up a lift they went, and down a corridor. A door was opened and they were ushered into a large room, quite different from all the others which the Prince had hitherto encountered. All around the walls were books, and there was an atmosphere of serenity and comfort that exuded calm deliberation. In the middle of the room was a large table at which was sitting a little man with white hair, who was in every sense of the term correctly dressed. Not once did the telephone ring throughout the interview. The little man rose, and with considerable charm and in a soft voice welcomed his two visitors and bade them be seated.

" I am sure I am delighted to meet you," he said to the Prince, adding, " What may I have the pleasure of doing for you ? "

The Prince looked at Pangloss, and Pangloss looked at the Prince. Pangloss regarded this as his cue and opened the proceedings.

" Well, as a matter of fact," he began, " we have come to you on a rather curious mission. I am in the fortunate position of being the Prince's host during his short visit to our shores, and we have come to you for help in a little difficulty." Pangloss recited the substance of the difficulty anent the most unusual, and probably highly irregular demand on the Prince for income tax, and then waited, hoping for an answer.

The great diplomat looked gravely at the form and the letter which Pangloss handed to him. Then he said, " We have nothing to do with income tax here ; nothing at all. I am afraid you have come to the wrong department."

Pangloss nearly had a fit. The Prince nearly laughed.

" Of course," said the diplomat, " if there is anything else I can do for you, I shall be only too pleased."

Pangloss breathed again and seized the golden opportunity.

" Actually," said Pangloss, " the Prince would be

most grateful if he could take this happy chance of being introduced to some of the secrets of British diplomacy. Of course he realizes that you can but sketch the rough outline of your world-wide activities. He has no desire whatever to probe into the obscure recesses in which, or the tortuous methods by which, the foreign policy of our country is so well conducted. He wishes for none of that, for obvious reasons. None the less, if you could but lift the veil, albeit for a little, it would be much appreciated by one who is himself greatly interested in foreign affairs. "For example," went on Pangloss, now thoroughly warmed up, "It is not infrequent for you to bring pressure to bear on one foreign government, and to relax it in respect of another. I surmise that this may well be achieved by a shrewd knowledge of the private vices or weaknesses of your opposite numbers in foreign capitals, or possibly, by the granting or withholding of certain financial advantages. For all I know, you may not be above putting an attractive lady into the arms of a foreign politician to get secrets out of him. Be that as it may, the astute but effective manner in which this is done, I am sure you could explain, in part, to the Prince. I expect, also, that before now, you have deceived a dictator, or intrigued to overthrow a government inimical to British interests. The skilful spreading of subtle propaganda to suit British interests is tactics for which your department is very well known. The art of negotiating bargains favourable to the British Crown in ways at once imperceptible yet masterly, would I know interest the Prince. Establishing spheres of influence over vast areas in advance of other Powers is one of the branches of your activity with which His Highness is already familiar, but even so, a few hints on that topic would be much esteemed. The Foreign Office is known to be the best informed body in the world. If a foreign monarch quarrels with his consort, or a prime minister falls into the hands of money-lenders, you know in advance before the event has ever occurred. Can you not vouchsafe His Highness a glimpse of the elaborate machinery by which you capture such vital information? Again, there are the military secrets of potential enemies, and the ever changing scenes of party politics in all countries. These matters, I believe,

constitute the regular routine of your department, upon which the Prince would be grateful for any information. In short, the whole manner in which you group friends and divide enemies, the sole *raison d'être* of diplomacy, would be a subject of absorbing interest to the Prince, and doubtless also of no little value to him personally, having regard to his own heavy responsibilities."

Pangloss paused a moment to get his breath and then suddenly continued.

"I have forgotten something most important. I am not unaware that your representatives lose no opportunity in any part of the world to do, what is known as, push British goods and services by which we earn a living. Any enlightenment on that subject the Prince would much appreciate."

Pangloss stopped as dramatically as he had begun, evidently well satisfied with himself. The eminent and distinguished personage to whom Pangloss had addressed this speech looked at him with a fixed and amazed stare as though he were a being from another planet.

"I fear you misunderstand the position altogether," he said, in quiet cultured tones. "To begin with, let me make one thing quite clear. I am not here to be bothered with questions about trade and industry, of which I know nothing and in which I am not even interested. Only this morning, I had to tell two members of my staff that I am in no way concerned with pork from Bulgaria or eggs from Poland."

The great man paused a moment, cleared his throat, and continued.

"It is clearly my bounden duty to remove from the minds of both of you certain illusions from which you seem to suffer. I should be glad, for example, if you would realize, once and for all, that never under any circumstances whatsoever does this department, either at home or abroad, do anything at all irregular. Moreover, we do nothing that might even seem or appear to be irregular. The prestige of the country, whose interests it is our duty to protect, is best maintained by the preservation of a becoming dignity. This dignity would be lost at once, and probably irretrievably, if we ever stooped to the low and rather unscrupulous methods implied by you. Such conduct is

positively forbidden and is indeed quite abhorrent to this department."

At this juncture the Prince thought he might join in the conversation, and inquired delicately what was in fact done by the department, in whose stately portals he was then sitting.

"I will tell you," said his courtly host. "You must understand that our policy is one of peace. We covet nobody's territory, we aspire to no other country's discomfiture, and we frown on all forms of disturbance to the balance of power. It is to preserve peace that all our efforts are directed, and that we make known everywhere."

"Forgive me interrupting," said the Prince, "but this passion for peace which you say is known to friend and foe alike, may it not involve you in more than one war?"

"I think not," came the answer. "The wars in which we have been involved in recent years have been no fault of ours."

"I should very much like to know what you do," interjected the Prince, who by now had forgotten all about his income tax demand.

"Ah! I expect you would like to know something of the more intimate departmental activity which keeps us very busy," said his new found friend. "Well, here for example is something on which I am at this moment engaged. I am in the process of drawing up a full report on a revolution that has recently broken out in a South American republic. You may have read about it in the newspapers. It seems to have been a serious affair and in fact was practically a civil war. It is not clear what it was all about. The Army appears to have been fighting the Navy. The loss of life was very heavy and much damage was done to property."

"Were there any interesting political principles at stake?" inquired the Prince.

"I do not know," replied the other man. "Moreover, I do not much care. All these political upheavals in that part of the world follow much the same pattern. Our Legation staff are all safe, I am glad to say, although some machine-gun bullets whizzed past the Legation building. One member of the staff actually got mixed up in the

fighting. That was much to be deplored. Had he been injured or killed it might well have presented us with a difficulty. That is an unpardonable crime in our Service."

There was a slight pause here, and the Prince took the opportunity to ask whether the individual in question might not have supplied some useful information.

"Oh, dear me, no," was the reply. "Any information that he might have gleaned would be far outweighed by the possibility of having compromised himself with one side or the other. That would be too dreadful to contemplate. I have sent strict orders that on any similar occasion all the members of our staff are to remain indoors throughout the turmoil."

The Prince, at this, expressed the opinion that the life of one serving abroad must be rather dull, under the circumstances.

"Not so dull as you think," continued his host, picking up a set of papers. "Here is another matter that has given me a lot of trouble. I had just disposed of it when you came in. In the capital of a certain country with which we are most friendly, a prominent Cabinet Minister has just died. He was a notorious atheist, and inasmuch as the country itself is officially Roman Catholic I was in some doubt whether we ought to be represented at the funeral. I have decided that a letter of condolence is to be written and a minor attaché is to accept the invitation to be present, but on the morning of the ceremony he is to be ill with influenza. I have to decide many difficult questions of etiquette, you know," he continued. "Here is another awkward problem. The Foreign Secretary of a second class Power is well known to be living with a woman not his wife. The country in question looks tolerantly on these matters. We cannot afford to offend the Minister nor would there be any advantage in so doing. Nor do we wish to offend our own people. How, therefore, is our envoy to entertain this man, if he will persist in always having this lady with him? Clearly, they cannot be officially received at the Legation. I have instructed him to entertain them both in the largest filled restaurant he can find, accompanied by his Irish secretary, and an attaché who is married to a Swede, and one of the latter's

children. Mixed up in a cosmopolitan group of that kind, no one can complain. I congratulate myself," he added, "that I sometimes solve these knotty problems with a finesse worthy of Talleyrand himself."

"Obviously you have many weighty matters on your mind," interposed Pangloss, tactfully.

"I have," said their host. "An important conference is taking place next week at Zurich, of all places. It is to discuss the education of Negroes in a disputed part of Africa. I know nothing of Negroes and I entirely disapprove of their education, but I am called upon to consider the order of precedence for the various delegations to enter and speak at the conference. I am clearly of the opinion that our representatives must speak first, though they are under instructions to see that the conference reaches no decisions at all."

"Evidently you are not above jockeying for position at international conferences," pointed out the Prince. "I am rather surprised at your doing that."

"Well," came the answer, "we like to see our country take the lead every now and again. In that connection I am glad to remind you that for years now we have invariably set the fashion in all social graces, an aspect of cardinal importance in foreign affairs. In matters of dress, and strict regard to social conventions, and in a nice appreciation in wines and cigars for our various invited guests, both at home and abroad, we stand unrivalled. But yesterday we discovered, thanks to the vigilance of a secretary, that the new counsellor at a certain embassy here in London is particularly fond of burgundy. We shall cater for his sensible taste in that respect on more than one occasion, I do not doubt. It is most helpful to know these things, you know. Next month we have to entertain a most important lady from the Balkans. Her husband is vice-premier of his country and may become prime minister himself any day, if that latter personage is assassinated, which is more than likely. I have ascertained from our highly efficient information services that the lady's favourite colour is love-in-the-mist blue. Certain West End shops have been warned accordingly. If, therefore, you see large quantities of lingerie of that colour exhibited in

Oxford Street, you will know why."

He stopped a moment, and then said, "I think, Prince, you have a good idea of our work. I venture to suggest that we conduct our multifarious activities with no little tact, infinite political perspicacity, and marked success. I really must ask you to excuse me now because I have much to do."

"But just one moment," said Pangloss. "We have settled nothing about this demand on the Prince for income tax."

"That can wait," said the Prince. "I have a question I should like to ask Sir Henry."

"With pleasure," replied the latter.

"You seem much burdened with questions of etiquette. Supposing I were to renounce my religion and embrace the Jewish faith; having so done, I announce my engagement to the widow of a Church of England bishop. The lady, it happens, has become a Roman Catholic, and we invite our friends to the ceremony in a non-conformist chapel. Would you, under those circumstances, send a representative to my wedding?"

"I doubt if such a marriage would be registered," came the quick reply. "In such a case, I should pass over the whole matter to the Home Office for consideration in that quarter. Moreover, I should take very good care to see that the reply, whatever it was, came back after the nuptials had taken place. The question of this department being represented at the wedding therefore, would not arise. Now, I really must ask you to leave me. With regard to the income tax demand," he continued, "er—let me see it again. I observe that certain particulars are either required or would be supplied by the Ministry of Health. I have an eminent and distinguished colleague there. I have forgotten his name for a moment, but you will find him on the top floor, I think."

On that, the Prince and Pangloss were shown out with a delicate mixture of firmness and courtesy.

On leaving the Foreign Office the Prince hinted that some lunch might be in order. Pangloss, however, suggested that they might visit the Ministry of Health first, on the faint chance that this department might dispose

finally of the difficulty that had brought them there. Actually, he placed very slender hopes on this department which he regarded as not only the most futile but also the most mischievous of the government departments. Moreover, having been almost commanded by the high personage they had just left, there was really no way of escape, and so they wandered in the direction of the Ministry of Health, the Prince all the time looking forward to his lunch.

On arrival, they entered a lift and travelled to the top floor. The messenger who accompanied them was not sure whether the appropriate official was in or out. In consequence, he suggested that our two friends should wait in one of the large offices while he went in search of someone who could attend to them. The Prince and Pangloss, accordingly, were shown into a very spacious room, filled with tables and desks of all kinds. Nobody was sitting at the desks. Instead, about twenty girls and a man or two were grouped round a table in the centre of the room, drinking tea and talking with great animation. The whole room re-echoed to the merry laughter of girls and the tinkling of tea-cups.

The messenger introduced them to one of the men and then departed on his errand. Telephones began to ring in all directions, quite unanswered. The Prince could not understand the position at all. After a lapse of a few minutes one of the girls went up to a switch board, grabbed a receiver, and shouted down it, "All lines engaged." Whereupon, she returned to the table, sipped some tea, and went on talking to her friends.

"I wish people would not ring up while we are having our elevenses; Cabinet Ministers, too!" the Prince heard her say.

The man to whom they had been introduced asked them to wait a few minutes, which was perforce what they had to do. Just at that moment, an individual entered the room from another door, carrying an immense pile of papers. He cast one glance at the assembled company of talking ladies and went out again, with his papers. One of the girls offered the Prince a cup of tea, which he accepted. Standing on the edge of the crowd and drinking his tea, he could not help overhearing some of the

conversation.

"Shocking, my dear, positively shocking, I call it," he heard a tall dark-haired girl saying to another. "They were actually seen on the Brighton front at half-past nine on a Monday morning."

"The inference is obvious," replied her friend.

"Of course it is," went on the dark-haired girl. "I knew something was going to happen. She has been having dresses and cigarettes and chocolates and simply dozens of hats from him for weeks. Of course he would not give her all that for nothing." The two girls having decided that little matter to their entire satisfaction proceeded to pour themselves out some more tea.

Another group appeared to be discussing under-clothing. The Prince overheard a short, red-haired girl say, "Have you heard her latest? She has the name of her favourite cocktail sewn on to her undies, and when anyone offers her a drink, she pulls up her skirt and you see the words 'Sweet Martini' or 'Clover Club.' She has the sauce to regard it as original."

The group to whom this piece of information was imparted unanimously considered such a sartorial exhibition very old-fashioned.

This was the moment for yet another individual to appear out of the same door, also armed with a huge collection of papers of all kinds. He, too, took one look and vanished.

A third group of ladies was busy talking about some dance to which they were all going. The Prince could not hear much of this conversation. He gathered, however, that the clothes they were going to wear formed the main topic in the debate. One lady was threatening to go in a particularly daring costume, which would put all the others in the shade. The lady in question, though hard pressed for particulars of its colour and make up, stubbornly refused to give details. So far as the Prince could hear, the dress was backless, nearly frontless, and generally so exiguous, that it practically did not exist at all. Furthermore, she announced her intention of appearing at the dance with her toe nails painted green, and shoes to match. From that, the ladies began asking themselves who was

going to be present at the dance. It seemed generally agreed that if a lady referred to as "Eva" was to be there, it was a sure guess that a man called "Arthur" would be there too. This livened up the discussion enormously. One lady could not understand what "Arthur" saw in "Eva," adding with much emphasis that "Eva" had not only better tread warily, but had better hurry up with "Arthur" as "Eva's" previous amatory adventures were not unknown. There were references also to the type of refreshments expected, and whether a lady—apparently well known would come with her husband or somebody else's. It seemed quite clear that the dance was being looked forward to with much pleasure on all sides.

In the meanwhile, the Prince, much mystified, reminded Pangloss that there was a little matter of business to settle, and also that he was, by now, hungry. Fortunately the messenger put in an appearance then, and they began to move in the direction of another nearby office. As they departed, the ladies still round the table continued to discuss hats and undies, and who was in love with whom and why.

The individual to whom they were eventually introduced was a repulsive looking creature to whom the Prince took an immediate dislike.

"I am merely concerned with your National Health Insurance contributions, that's all," said this person, adding, "I shall expect you to fill up the appropriate forms. Apart from that, you have come to the wrong department."

"I thought so," said the Prince. "And may I ask which is the right department?"

There was a slight delay during which it was clear that his interlocutor was indulging in much deep thought. The Prince did not, however, have to wait long. The Board of Trade was indicated.

The Prince and Pangloss went out, the Prince making it quite clear that the time really had come for lunch. A restaurant was soon found and the Prince sat down to a hearty meal which he considered he had earned. Pangloss, on the other hand, was off his appetite and somewhat depressed.

"We have had rather a wasted morning, I think," said the Prince. "So far, I have not been very favourably

impressed. I should have preferred looking at the shops."

"I quite understand," replied Pangloss, "but as a matter of fact, we have been rather unlucky, that is all."

It required all Pangloss's noted tact and social dexterity to allay the Prince's irritation, but he was able to do so by the time the meal was over. A generous supply of liqueurs and a good cigar may have had something to do with it. At any rate, on arrival at the Board of Trade, the Prince was much mollified and in excellent form.

On this occasion they were received by a person who was clearly highly intelligent. He was about middle age, and on the entry of our two friends he looked keenly at them through a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. He saw in front of him two members of that vast mysterious public which it was his duty to serve, but of whose real activities he had very little knowledge. An immense quantity of papers and forms were hastily put on one side and he addressed himself to the matter before him with what appeared to be much business-like efficiency. He loudly informed a secretary in an adjoining room that on no account was he to be disturbed. He extinguished a cigarette he was smoking, adjusted his glasses, and examined with care the letter and form placed in front of him by Pangloss, who explained again the nature of the difficulty. The great bureaucrat listened with marked attention, occasionally making notes in a manner the Prince could not avoid seeing. At length he intimated that he would like some particulars of the Prince, which, he hastened to explain, were mere formalities, but none the less necessary ones.

The Prince was invited to give some account of the trading activities of his State. Flax and soya beans were constantly mentioned. He was also asked how much of the revenue he, personally, received, and how much went into the coffers of his Minister of Finance. A variety of other matters were touched on, such as stamp fees, customs duties, if any, and local taxes; all of which were carefully noted.

At this stage, the gifted supervisor of Britain's far flung trade, industry and commerce, seeing that the visitor was co-operative, boldly addressed himself to an immense

variety of matters that he evidently considered germane to the question in front of him. The Prince was asked to give some figures about the population of Patam Patam. What was the state of the birth rate? How many epileptics were there? Was vaccination compulsory, or not? If not, how many persons of both sexes were vaccinated annually? Was drunkenness on the increase, and how many convictions were there per annum? What percentage of lunatics were cured? What proportion of houses had modern sanitation, and was the rating assessment increased, or not, in respect of those houses that did enjoy such amenities.

"I take it the Dangerous Drugs regulations apply where you live," quietly asked the official.

"I haven't the faintest notion," answered the Prince.

"Have you lice?" was the next question.

"Certainly not," replied the Prince.

"I did not mean on you, personally," explained the great bureaucrat. "I am at this moment sending out a pamphlet on parasitic insects to all local Medical Officers of Health, and I thought you might like a few thousand copies."

Mutual smiles ended this incident.

Now the Prince had done his best to answer these questions, but he thought it about time to let it be known that he regarded all these matters as somewhat irrelevant. Whereupon his interrogator promptly changed his tactics, and asked the Prince for his full name, and date and place of birth. The Prince vouchsafed this information willingly. Next he was asked for the full names, and dates and places of birth of his father and mother. This information also he gave without any hesitation. But when he was asked for the same particulars concerning all four of his grandparents, even his good-nature was strained.

"What on earth have the christian names of my grandmothers got to do with this demand for income tax?" he inquired, as politely as possible.

"It is most essential for me to have this information," came the reply, in suave tones.

By this time, however, even the great bureaucrat realized he had secured as much information as he was

likely to get—compatible with his own safety—and he then asked His Highness how much money he had brought to this country and how he had brought it. When he was requested to supply details of his private income in this country, if he had any, together with a variety of other matters of an extremely personal character, he expressed much surprise.

"I am merely checking 'up,'" said the other man, "Merely checking up. I must have these facts and figures for our records."

"But I am not so sure that I want you to have all these facts and figures for your records," rejoined the Prince.

"One never knows when information of this kind might be needed," came the reply. "We like to have it in our files."

Even Pangloss evinced no little anxiety at this stage and politely mentioned the real reason for their visit.

"Yes, of course," said the great bureaucrat, "I was forgetting. Let me see. You came here about income tax. As a matter of fact —," he paused a moment as though he were about to make not only a bright, but an original remark, and added, "You have come to the wrong department. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, where I have an eminent and --"

But he proceeded no further.

"If you tell me you have an eminent and distinguished colleague at the Ministry of Agriculture, I will blow your brains out," roared Pangloss, now thoroughly roused. "To begin with, what on earth has the Ministry of Agriculture got to do with an Indian Prince's income tax," continued Pangloss.

"He grows soya beans," answered the official, calmly.

"Damn the soya beans," shouted Pangloss, thumping the table with his fist and splashing the ink all over the desk.

"My dear Sir," interposed the other man, "I cannot have this. I have sat her for twenty-five years, and never before —"

"Any fool can see you have been here for twenty-five years, and are likely to stay here for another twenty-five,"

burst out Pangloss, who by now had completely lost his temper.

Pangloss simply stormed at the great bureaucrat, who stormed back. The Prince watched this unhappy scene with complete detachment. Only when the two men seemed about to engage in actual violence did he intervene.

"Calm yourselves, gentlemen ; calm yourselves," he said, putting himself between the two. "If it gives any pleasure to either of you, I will gladly pay a visit to the headquarters of Britain's agriculture. I am very interested in agricultural matters and no harm will be done if we go there. Come, Pangloss, let us go ; let us go, I beg of you."

These conciliatory remarks had their effect, and after renewed protestations on the part of the representative of the Board of Trade that his department had nothing to do with this particular matter, the Prince and Pangloss departed for the Ministry of Agriculture.

"If we get no satisfaction here," said Pangloss, adjusting his somewhat disordered tie and putting his coat straight, "I will take you to the Prime Minister himself.

"No, you won't," replied the Prince. "I refuse to go anywhere else, after this."

The advent of these two important personages had evidently been duly heralded by the individual they had just left. No doubt he had been only too pleased to get rid of them and to apply himself to his important work. They were, in fact, received almost at once by quite a young man. This young man listened attentively to Pangloss's by now hackneyed speech, and then asked for time to consider the matter. The young man asked some questions about the soya beans, and was obviously interested in flax.

The Prince sensed at once that he was in the presence of a born negotiator, due doubtless to the gentleman's agricultural orientation. The Prince consequently adopted a very coy attitude, and, while remaining perfectly courteous, deftly avoided answering any direct questions. The young man became similarly reserved, with the result that no progress at all was made. Pangloss got restive and asked pointedly what they should do, and where they should go.

"There is more than one department to which this

inquiry should be directed, I imagine," answered the young man, coolly. " You might visit the Ministry of Works, for example. I cannot say that department strikes me as being particularly useful to anyone, but its activities cover a wide range, and they might help you there, if it is only to tell you to go to another, and possibly the correct department. There is, then, the Treasury Solicitor. He ought to know something about this ; or, for the matter of that, the Public Trustee. That latter personage appears to operate as public nursemaid to all and sundry. For a person in your position, Prince, it is not unlikely that the Lord Great Chamberlain's office might have some information on the topic. These, and other departments you might suitably visit."

" Now, look here," interrupted Pangloss, sharply. " We have absolutely no intention of visiting any of these personages."

" Then, I cannot help feeling," replied the young man, " that the proper department to deal with this matter is the War Office. There is an officer there—I believe his name is Captain Rake — "

He never finished his remarks. The Prince and Pangloss rose simultaneously and walked out. Down in the main street of Whitehall, the Prince turned on Pangloss.

" I cannot say I think much of this marvellous governmental machine of yours," he said. " It is nothing but a circus. You go round and round and merely end up where you began. I still have no answer to this income tax query."

Pangloss was about to put forward a spirited defence on behalf of officialdom, when the attention of both of them was directed towards a large crowd of persons marching noisily down Whitehall. This crowd, of both sexes, assumed ever bigger, and above all noisier, proportions as it came nearer. Its attitude was menacing in the extreme. A man in the middle of the leading ranks shouted out, " Down with the ruling class ! " Another man next to him was heard to yell, " Down with the Government ! " Both demonstrators evoked tremendous applause.

It was then that Pangloss saw, to his horror, dozens

of red flags and banners, the latter invariably adorned with the hammer and sickle. Slogans of a most subversive kind were bawled out by all and sundry. One part of the crowd was singing "The Red Flag," another, the "Internationale."

"What is this?" asked the Prince, much surprised.

"Oh, it is nothing," replied Pangloss, "it is only the unemployed demonstrating."

The Prince did not understand this at all because at that moment one of the demonstrators roughly pushed into his hand a pamphlet across which was written, "Join the Communist Party and fight for justice for the workers." He had started to read the pamphlet, to Pangloss's evident annoyance, when he was interrupted by loud and prolonged cheering. He glanced in the direction from which most of the noise was coming and he saw a man standing on the top of an over-turned taxi-cab. This man was quite short, his head was covered with thick, black hair, and he possessed a long nose behind which was a most villainous looking face. He began to address the crowd in a voice that could be heard a mile away.

"Comrades and fellow wage slaves," he shouted, "now is the time for the revolution. Now is the time to overthrow the existing order of society. Now is the time to put an end to the rotten capitalist system."

More cheering broke out, and the speaker having gained his breath, went on.

"Comrades, the first thing the workers have got to do is to push over the Westminster gas house. What has the House of Commons ever done for the working classes?"

These remarks provoked thunderous applause which continued for quite a while. So great was the noise that the Prince was unable to hear all that the orator was saying. He did, however, catch a phrase here and there such as, "Why should workers starve while parasites fatten?" and, "Nationalization, the workers' only hope."

In the midst of the commotion the Prince endeavoured to secure from Pangloss some sort of coherent explanation of what was happening. In this he was destined to be disappointed. A burly policeman shouted into his ear, "Pass along there, please." This cry was taken up by

other representatives of law and liberty. "Pass along there, please," was heard in all directions.

The Prince and Pangloss proceeded to pass along as best they could. In truth, they had no alternative.

Suddenly, a solemn hush came over the crowd, as though the speaker had mentioned some great and wondrous topic, which in fact he had. He had uttered the magic word, "Russia," and a certain uneasy stillness pervaded everywhere.

"Contrast, comrades," proceeded the fiery orator, "the horrors of life under capitalism with the blessings of life in the Soviet Union. In the first real workers' state there are no slums, no food queues, no exploitation of man by man. The products of the world belong to all and everyone has a fair share. Under Communism privilege does not exist, reaction is stifled, vested interests are not tolerated, and the workers march triumphantly forward to the perfect socialist classless state."

The Prince was about to point out to Pangloss that he was not the only one to believe that somewhere on this earth there was a politically organized community where all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, when a change came over the situation. They had been pushed by the moving crowd to the edge of a side street. Assembled in this side street was a formidable array of policemen with their batons drawn. In the distance could be seen some mounted police.

Pangloss surveyed the all too familiar scene with a sad heart. It was a tragedy of tragedies that this should occur at the very moment when he was exerting all his art to convince his distinguished visitor of the high standard of civilization attained by the English. A final "Pass along, please," was heard by both of them, and then the police charged.

In the undignified scuffle that ensued, the Prince was unscathed, but Pangloss found himself on the ground, unhurt, but much disconcerted. As the wave of police passed through the crowd, the Prince saw and heard much that was not entirely clear to him. The luckless orator, on being unceremoniously shoved off his taxi-cab, informed the police that they were "Boss class thugs." Another

desperate-looking creature fighting with a policeman informed that heavily-built specimen of humanity that he was a "mere tool of reaction." The Prince heard and saw much else. The infinite extent to which the English language could be distorted in the mouths of angry men, and still angrier women, was brought home to him in a manner not quickly forgotten.

Pangloss, on recovering, espied a small doorway but a yard or two distant. With marked agility and a considerable adroitness he half dragged, half pushed the Prince, not only to the doorway, but right through it. They both breathed again, and Pangloss proceeded to tidy himself.

"What is all that about," asked the Prince.

"Oh, it's nothing," replied Pangloss. "The unemployed, led by the Communists, are sending a deputation to the Prime Minister to protest against something; I don't know what about."

"You wanted me to interview the Prime Minister, I believe. I imagine he will be rather busy if he has to see all those people in one afternoon," remarked the Prince.

Pangloss ignored this observation and literally ordered the Prince to follow him as quickly as he could.

It so happened that they had entered another government department. On this occasion, however, they did not linger to ascertain the nature of its activities. A long corridor was in front of them down which they walked with more than usual speed. At the end was a door leading into St. James's Park. Having arrived at that comparatively calm and serene spot, Pangloss embarked upon a lengthy apology for all that had occurred.

The Prince, however, cut him short.

"You need not worry," he said, "I am not unaware of the difficulties of government and the unreasonableness of men and women. I do not think we need spend any more time over this claim for income tax. I shall not be here for long and from what I have seen I imagine the innumerable officials will be a long time deciding what to do, if I don't pay. By that time I shall be out of the country. Let me say at once, I refuse to pay a penny piece."

Pangloss expressed the opinion that that was certainly a very practical attitude to adopt.

"If you do not mind my saying so," added the Prince, "I have seen enough of politics. Could I not see something else?"

"Certainly," replied Pangloss, much relieved. "What would you like to see?" he added, thinking in terms of the National Gallery, or the Tower of London.

"Well," said the Prince, "I should very much like to see how your people earn a living. I have heard a good deal about England's trade, industry, and commerce. It would give me much pleasure to be introduced to that."

The face of Pangloss beamed all over.

"Nothing easier," he replied, "nothing easier. I will take you to-morrow to the City,"

By that time they were well on the way to the Prince's hotel. This was, in due course, reached, and after another pleasurable dinner, the Prince went to sleep with the consoling reflection that on the morrow he was to see something of the far-famed economic activities of the English, by which they have spread their influence all over the world.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCE VISITS THE CITY

THE NEXT MORNING Pangloss arrived a little after ten o'clock. The Prince was bundled into a taxi-cab and they drove off to the City.

"I am sorry I am late," said Pangloss. "As a matter of fact, I have been telephoning to the very man we are going to see. He is a great city magnate, and we are very lucky to be able to see him at all. He is very busy indeed. He is actually in his office now, and although he mentioned to me that he has a board meeting during the morning, he has, none the less, arranged to set apart a few minutes in which to see us."

The Prince replied that he was pleased to hear this, and inquired who this important person was.

"Well," said Pangloss, "He is, what we should call, one of the veritable pillars of the City. In addition to his own group of companies which he controls entirely himself, he is on the board of several others. Amongst other things, he is a director of an insurance company and I believe a bank. I know nothing of his origin, but he has had a vast experience of business in many directions. He is, in every sense of the term, an eminent and successful financier, and I am sure you will like him."

By now, the taxi-cab was approaching the City, and Pangloss thought it desirable that the Prince should be more formally notified of the nature of the great precincts he was entering.

"You see in front of you," said Pangloss, "the great City of London. It is unlike any other place in the world. Its history, which is long, chequered, and not inglorious, need not detain us. It is enough for you that there is concentrated within this small area all the wealth and brains of the commercial world. Nowhere else will you

see so much administrative talent. These men manage vast concerns whose name and fame are known and respected everywhere. Our unrivalled manufactured articles may be made in huge factories in the North, but those same factories depend on the City. Nowhere else will you see so much financial acumen. Nowhere else will you see such shrewd buyers or such clever salesmen. The whole elaborate structure of credit and capital is centred in and controlled from this square mile or two. All the great companies, from which we earn our livelihood, have their head offices somewhere here. Decisions affecting the destinies of countless millions of all classes are taken daily by men, whose business abilities and general calibre are recognized to be the best in the world. The financial standing of the City is such that no transaction is too big for it. Foreign governments come to the City of London for money, itself the finest compliment of all. Vast loans are negotiated by telephone. Capital issues to any amount and for any purposes are floated here. Companies are amalgamated, untapped areas of the earth's surface planned for development, immense fortunes made, and I fear, sometimes lost, within the narrow limits of this great city. Last and not least of all," added Pangloss, smiling proudly, "the standards of business morality displayed here are second to none. The promised word of these men, we invariably say, is their very bond. By that we mean that these business men would rather lose a limb than defraud a fellow creature. Strict honesty, absolute good faith and disarming frankness are everywhere the order of the day. To the business men of the City of London you could entrust your very soul, let alone your money." Pangloss stopped, if only for the very practical reason that they were not far from their destination. The Prince, somewhat overpowered by his companion's eloquence, maintained a discreet silence.

The taxi-cab drew up opposite a large white building, not dissimilar to an American skyscraper. Our two friends got out, marched into the building and entered a lift. On the way up, Pangloss inquired of the lift man if Sir William was in. He was informed that Sir William was in.

"I forgot to tell you," mentioned Pangloss casually, "the man we are going to see is Sir William William William."

The lift man smiled. Pangloss smiled. The Prince felt he ought to smile, and did so. It was clear that His Highness was remarkably lucky in being able to glimpse so busy a personage. The lift stopped and they emerged into an extensive corridor, along the sides of which were many doors leading into various offices. In front of one of these doors they halted.

The door was opened and the Prince and Pangloss entered an extremely commodious apartment. It was elaborately furnished. Chairs, expensively upholstered in green morocco were to be seen in all parts of the room. The carpet was costly and the curtains heavy. It was obvious that no expense had been spared in fitting up what was evidently both the board room and the managing director's office of a great limited-liability company. In the far corner, raised on a small dais, was the most magnificent chair of all; it looked like a small throne. In front of it was a large desk, littered with papers and letters. Sitting on the throne was a plump little man of no very prepossessing appearance. On the entry of the Prince and Pangloss he rose and greeted them with much affability.

"I am glad to see you," he said to them, extending his hand clumsily to the Prince.

The two sat down, only to be bidden to get up again.

"I am sorry I cannot see you yet," said the little man. "The fact is, I have a board meeting almost at once. It won't take long," he added, "No, it won't take long. I am going to ask you to wait in the waiting room for a matter of ten minutes. Run your eyes over 'The Times' while you are waiting. You will find it there." So saying, he ushered them into a smaller room at the side.

The room into which they moved was also comfortably furnished. This did not, however, strike the Prince. What attracted his notice was the door through which they had passed. He observed that this door did not close entirely. There was, in point of fact, a fairly wide aperture between the door and the wall. An inquisitive person

could seat himself in such a position that he could see and hear all that transpired at the meeting of directors about to take place in the main room they had just quitted. The temptation was too great for him.

"I have never seen a board meeting before," said the Prince to Pangloss. "I must see what goes on."

Pangloss protested, but only half-heartedly. It occurred to him that the proceedings at a board meeting of a public company, whose shares were quoted daily on the Stock Exchange, might possibly produce some not unuseful information. His protest, therefore, at the apparent breach of good breeding was purely formal and he, too, installed himself in such a position that he could overhear what took place. Occasionally he moved about the room to pretend that he was not over interested. He did not, however, miss much. It so happened that Pangloss knew the directors of this company by repute, and he was able to tell the Prince something about them every now and again.

The board table was at the lower end of the main room and by this time Sir William William William had taken his seat at the head of it, armed with a bundle of impressive looking papers, which he spread out in front of him. Various odd-looking individuals filed in and took their seats. A very old man came in first and sat on the left of Sir William.

"That is Sir George Eighty," said Pangloss. "He is on the board of many companies. I think he is a retired Civil Servant with a most distinguished career."

After that there came in an enormously tall, lanky man with a vapid expression on his face. He smiled at his co-directors, sat down, and looked rather bored.

"That is Sir Arthur somebody or other," interposed Pangloss. "I have forgotten his name for the moment, but he is well known."

Next, there appeared an individual who was plainly a nonentity. He also took his seat at the board table. The next arrival was evidently a person of some importance. He carried papers, was greeted with some warmth by all the others, and sat down on Sir William's right hand.

"That is Major Blaggaville," said Pangloss. "He is

the secretary of the company, and as such he is most important."

Now Blaggaville was important. He came of a good family, which was one of the reasons why Sir William had picked him up. Blaggaville had been to a good school and in a good regiment. Having been very politely asked to leave the former, and singularly impolitely asked to leave the latter, he had drifted into the City where he had encountered Sir William. He and Sir William had soon come to terms with one another. Each knew a good deal about the other. If the worst came to the worst, Sir William, being far more astute, could prove more against Blaggaville than Blaggaville could prove against Sir William. Moreover, Sir William paid Blaggaville, and as the latter by now had lost most of his friends and had no other means of livelihood, Sir William had him in the hollow of his hand. Sir William used him in all directions, principally for negotiating. Sir William was a past master in keeping in the background when any dirty work had to be done; hence the usefulness of Blaggaville, who was, amongst other things, a first class bluffer.

All at once, there was much activity. All eyes were turned on the door as the last arrival put in an appearance. He was a little man, with a face like a ferret. He was obviously in a great hurry. He dashed in, sat down at the end of the table opposite to Sir William, and generally gave an air of having kept the appointment with great difficulty.

"He is probably the biggest rogue of the lot," said the Prince who, by now, had begun to suspect that there was something funny about the company.

Pangloss was on the point of protesting when the board meeting opened.

Sir William surveyed his well marshalled team, and having satisfied himself that they were all there, he turned to Blaggaville, and with carefully prepared pomp called upon him to read the minutes of the last board meeting.

Blaggaville seized a dirty-looking notebook and gabbled out something at great speed. The Prince could hear very little, nor, if it came to the point, could the directors themselves hear much. The Prince overheard

references to the company's balance sheet which was alleged to be very satisfactory. After that was mentioned the transfer of some shares all of which had been duly registered. There was a passing reference to the company's reserves, which as far as the Prince could gather did not amount to much, and Blaggaville finished.

Instantly, Sir William rose and said, "Is it your will and pleasure, gentlemen, that I sign these minutes as being correct?"

The yes-yes men all bowed and Sir William, with a great flourish, signed the minutes.

"That concludes the first business on the agenda," he announced pontifically, "I shall not detain you long today. As a matter of fact, there is very little of outstanding importance to report, or in fact anything that you gentlemen need know."

If the Prince was expecting a concise account of the company's vast trading activities he was destined not to be satisfied. Sir William, with greater speed than Blaggaville, ran over one or two matters. (It was at this stage that the Prince became aware, if his hearing was not at fault, that Sir William was distinctly weak on his aspirates). All the factories in the group were working at full production, Sir William announced. He then informed the meeting that the forthcoming dividend was assured, adding that there might even be a bonus. A brief reference to shares in subsidiary companies, which, he reminded his audience, formed the company's main asset, provoked the man with a face like a ferret to start making signals to Sir William. Sir William took the hint and passed on to the next point. This next point, he explained, did cause a little difficulty.

"As a matter of fact," he announced, "the shareholders in one of our subsidiary companies will have to submit to some writing down of capital. They won't like it, I know, but they will have to submit to it. We come out of it all right," he added in an undertone, "so it does not matter much."

At that moment, Sir William and Blaggaville produced a bunch of documents of all kinds which were passed round the meeting for the directors to sign. With the exception

of the man with a ferret's face, the members of the board proceeded to sign their names to all sorts of documents. Nobody read the documents. The directors just appended their names wherever they were told to by Sir William. The documents were then all collected by Blaggaville, who folded them up carefully and handed them over to Sir William.

"That, I think, concludes the business of the meeting, gentlemen," Sir William then stated. "I am sure I am very much obliged to you. You have all been of very great help indeed and I know the shareholders will be most grateful." On that, he, more or less, dismissed them.

The little man at the end of the table, however, had something to say. In mild tones he pointed out that the question of directors' fees had not been mentioned. Now this man, as a matter of fact, knew what Sir William was, and had no more money invested in the company than was necessary for his qualification shares. As such, he was not very interested in the company's dividends, but he was in the directors' fees. Hence he mentioned the matter with an appropriate mixture of firmness and politeness.

"Oh-ah-yes," replied Sir William, jocularly, "I had forgotten that. I always forget something. Our fees will be the same as last year. I might, however, add this. Subject to the shareholders' approval, which you may take as granted, I propose to pay all directors' fees free of income tax; that is to say, the company will pay all tax." Sir William was something of an artist in his own way, and he was only too pleased to bring the proceedings to an end on this happy note.

The directors rose from their seats and filed out; the little man with a face like a ferret going out first, in a great hurry, having let it be known that he was going to another board meeting at once.

The end of the board meeting was the signal for Sir William to resume his seat on his throne, and to invite the Prince and Pangloss to come in again. The two of them sat down on vacant chairs at the side of Sir William's huge desk, and each was offered a cigar. The Prince noticed that there were no less than four telephones on this desk. One of these rang almost at once, and Sir William

seized the receiver and started talking in a most animated fashion. The Prince heard references to "markets being firm" and then Sir William told the caller at the other end to buy two thousand of something, from which it was not difficult to deduce that Sir William was talking to his broker. At the end of the conversation Sir William inquired after the "Soft Tin" group. Having received some sort of reply, he replaced the receiver, informing his hearers casually, "We are watching the 'Soft Tin' group, you know."

"What is that," asked the Prince.

"Well, replied Sir William, with much unctuousness, "We are watching the 'Soft Tin' group of shares on the Stock Exchange. There is a recently formed group of companies somewhere in the Midlands, whose shares have been very weak in the last week or so. We are expecting something to happen any day now, and I must be informed if anything does happen. My broker is watching price changes most carefully and will let me know instantly if anything startling occurs."

He had no sooner finished this telephone conversation than another began, this time on a different receiver.

"Excuse me," said Sir William, "this is a long distance call from Johannesburg."

This call was disposed of very quickly. Sir William sold some diamond shares and bought some copper shares. He seemed highly delighted with both transactions, and rubbed his hands with glee. Thousands of pounds were mentioned, which Sir William took no steps to conceal from the Prince.

"Now, gentlemen, he said, turning to our two friends, "I think I can talk to you."

But it was not to be. Another telephone rang, and this time, as he took pains to explain, it was from his agent in Manchester. There was some desultory conversation and then Sir William loudly informed his agent, "That is all right. I will buy them both," and the conversation terminated.

"I have just bought a couple of companies," he informed his two visitors.

This time he did make a serious attempt to talk to the

Prince and Pangloss. Pangloss intimated to Sir William that His Highness was on an unofficial visit to England, and would account it a great pleasure if he could see something of the great business activities and commercial enterprises of this country, of which he had heard so much and hitherto seen nothing. The Prince himself interposed at this juncture and emphasized that he wanted no carefully prepared tour, but preferred to see the day to day life of a great limited liability company as it really was.

Sir William looked at them both somewhat suspiciously and was about to reply when a woman secretary entered. The lady whispered something in his ear, which Pangloss could not help overhearing. She mentioned the word "writ" at which Sir William was obviously much annoyed, and he bundled her out faster than she had come in. The situation was retrieved by another telephone call which was obviously on the inter-house line. Sir William was informed that a certain peer was waiting down below to see him. He had no hesitation in replying that he was far too busy to see anyone.

"Of course," he said to the Prince, "we manufacture a large range of goods in this group, and we have companies all over the world."

He was interrupted by the entry of Blaggaville, who brought with him a telegram. Sir William took one glance at it, and was heard to say, "That's all right. We can evade payment for a while at any rate, can't we?" Blaggaville replied in the affirmative, and went out again.

The telephone rang yet again, and it was obvious that Sir William was talking to the same broker to whom he had been speaking a little while earlier. The "Soft Tin" group was mentioned, so was another group which sounded like "Automatic Tooth Brushes"; after which, Sir William told his broker to sell, and put down the receiver.

"I have just picked up a few thousand pounds while I have been talking to you," he added--by way of merry afterthought.

At this stage, Pangloss thought it desirable to intervene, and reminded Sir William that His Highness was anxious to see something of modern business.

"Of course--of course," replied Sir William. "Now,

as a matter of fact, you have called on me at a very opportune moment. I can show you something that might be of very great interest to you." He paused a moment, and from the centre drawer of his desk produced a large, printed, grey-coloured form. It was a prospectus, and Pangloss became somewhat nervous.

Sir William, speaking with the coyness and charm of a beautiful woman, said to the Prince, "I have here a particular attractive debenture issue. I sit on the board of a finance house, and every now and again I am concerned in floating capital issues. It so happens that this particular issue is in respect of one of my subsidiary companies. Now, these debentures are exceptionally attractive. They are four and three-quarter per cent. debentures, which is a most advantageous return, and they are secured on one of our freehold factories in the Midlands. We are expecting to raise five hundred thousand pounds, which you hardly need to be told is not a large sum of money, and I have no doubt the money will be subscribed quite early." He stopped a minute and looked at both his visitors keenly. Seeing no untoward signs on the horizon, he proceeded more confidently.

"Now it occurs to me, Prince," he continued, "that you might come in on this deal. Through me, you could be allotted, in advance, ten or twenty thousand of these debentures at a considerable discount. Dealings are sure to start at a premium, so if you do not want to hold them you could sell them and pick up a nice little profit of several hundred pounds. I am sure you would not mind my asking for, say, a third of what you make, so we should all come out of it rather nicely."

Pangloss immediately interrupted the conversation and said, "Permit me to inform you, Sir William, that His Highness is not here to embark on a course of company promoting."

"I did not say he was," answered Sir William, "but surely he is not above making a little money every now and again. I have never known a man not that way inclined," he added, speaking doubtless from his long experience of business.

The Prince himself was far from clear as to what this

all meant, but he was no fool, and the figure of half a million pounds had aroused his curiosity. It is not surprising, therefore, that he asked Sir William, in the most polite manner, to explain to him what happened to this money when, and if, it had been raised.

"What do you do with this five hundred thousand pounds, may I venture to inquire," said the Prince, with perfect courtesy.

"What do I do with it?" replied Sir William, "What do you suppose I do with it? It is all spent on bona fide capital expenditure."

At that precise moment Blaggaville re-entered the room, apparently in a hurry, and carrying a bundle of papers under his arm.

"Forgive me interrupting," said Blaggaville to Sir William, "But I would be grateful if you would settle one or two points in the balance sheet before I send it to the printers." Whereupon, there was spread in front of Sir William several large double sheets of closely typed foolscap.

"Excuse me," said Sir William to his two friends, seizing a pen and applying his great brain to the company's balance sheet and director's report which, in due course, would be laid before his shareholders.

The Prince followed the ensuing discussion as best he could, though he found it difficult to keep pace with Sir William's juggling.

"Write that figure down by another thirty per cent., and that one up by twenty-five per cent.," he began with Blaggaville, putting his pen through two items in the balance sheet. "As for the stock figure," he continued, "add another hundred thousand pounds, and then take off ten per cent. for depreciation. With regard to the reserves, we will increase those by eighty thousand pounds, and then reduce them by thirty thousand, being excess of profits over future possible taxation. The figure for commitments in excess of current prices can disappear altogether. Transfer it to the profit and loss account and add it on to the deferred premiums. Nobody will understand that. Who put in profits from prior years and miscellaneous surpluses at fifteen thousand pounds?" he almost shouted at Blaggaville.

"I don't know," replied that individual.

"Then alter it at once and add it on to the special depreciation fund." So saying, he put his pen through that item. "I am not entirely satisfied at the large figure in respect of our shares in subsidiary companies," he continued. "That is our principal asset and there might be some awkward questions asked. Write that figure down by a quarter and increase the figure for plant replacement. The amounts due from associated companies, foreign participations, and other ventures, can be increased substantially. That always looks well in a balance sheet. Don't say too much about the directors' fees for fear of frightening them; reduce that figure by half. We can make it up somewhere else. Oh—by the way," he added coolly, "what profit are we showing?"

Blaggaville directed his attention to a figure on the second page.

"I see," said Sir William. "Have we got the cash for the dividend and bonus?"

"Not yet," answered Blaggaville, "but the debenture issue is coming out next week."

"Of course, of course," concluded Sir William, signing his name to the bulky document. "That will do, excellently. Now, send off the accounts to the printers as quickly as you can." With that, he dismissed Blaggaville with a haughty wave of his hand.

Blaggaville, however, was not to be got rid of so easily. He reminded Sir William that the latter's speech to the shareholders had not, as yet, been considered.

Sir William thought hard for a minute and then said to Blaggaville, "Let me see, later, a copy of the speech I made to the shareholders last year. Practically the same speech will do if we just alter the figures."

This time Blaggaville did depart.

Now, Pangloss had seen and heard all this with growing anxiety. As a member of the bar he was not entirely unfamiliar with the principles of company law. In consequence, he was rapidly coming to the conclusion that he had brought the Prince to the wrong sort of company altogether. He moved restlessly in his chair and made evident signs of desiring to go. Sir William, however,

was not disposed to let off his guests so lightly. He turned to Pangloss and said, "Let me see. Patam Patam--where is this place from which His Highness comes?"

Pangloss instantly pointed out that Patam Patam was to be found somewhere in Southern India.

"India," repeated Sir William, cogitating, "India--oh, yes--that is after Egypt and before China, is it not?"

A painful pause occurred, during which Pangloss indicated to the Prince that the time had arrived for their departure. As they were beginning to move, Sir William turned to the Prince and said, "I hope you don't mind my asking you where your country is, and something about it. The fact is, I was wondering whether we could not float a company there. At least we could have the company registered abroad. We three would be the directors, and I could soon get some more men to sit on the board, if necessary."

The Prince looked at him with some surprise, not to say suspicion.

"What business would the company do?" asked His Highness.

"None whatsoever," replied Sir William, "at least, nothing worth mentioning. I would pass over a little every now and again with the object of window-dressing. We should use the company for quite other purposes. There is, for instance, the question of income tax."

At the mention of income tax the Prince became sufficiently interested to resume his seat. He did more than that. He could not help blurting out that he himself was experiencing difficulties in that respect.

"What!" laughed Sir William, "You allow yourself to be troubled with income tax. I don't take a ha'porth of notice of that. Not only have I companies all over the world, but I have directorships in various different countries. This enables me to pay just what I like and not a penny piece more. The damned government does not get much money out of me, I can assure you."

He paused a moment, wondering how far he could trust his hearers. He was also thinking of something else. For a Prince to sit on the board of one of his companies would be to capture the most magnificent guinea pig of

all. He began to weigh the chances in more directions than one. On the whole, he came to the conclusion that a few questions had better be put to the Prince before he went any further.

"What do you know about business?" asked Sir William.

"Nothing at all," answered the Prince.

"That's all right," said Sir William, "that would suit me excellently. Would you be prepared to keep your mouth shut?" was the next question.

The Prince made no reply to this and Sir William proceeded, "Amongst other things, I should want you to sign your name just wherever I told you. As you say you know nothing of business, that would present no difficulty. As a matter of fact, it is not only in connection with income tax that I could find a use for your company. We could pass over to it unremunerative contracts. Frequently, price changes leave us with business that has to be done at a loss. At the moment, one of our English subsidiaries is handling all that. It would be better to get rid of it all out of the country if possible. Then there is another thing you could do for us. With friendly competitors I sometimes enter into agreements to sell certain goods at prices agreed upon by all of us. These arrangements are sometimes found inconvenient. I never let the parent company break a trade agreement of that kind, but your proposed subsidiary could do it easily. I could also pass over to you the delicate, and sometimes unpleasant, task of getting rid of any of our managers who get to know too much. That is often occurring. We are sometimes troubled with litigation. Your company could have a solicitor on the board, and be assigned the special job of receiving all writs and wriggling out of liability. I should not be squeamish as to the methods you adopted. To exploit every pretext and take full advantage of your opponents' mistakes, I have found to be good tactics in most disputes.

"We could even use your company to carry any shares either I, or any of my companies have bought, if prices go against us. I should like to explain, Prince," concluded Sir William, "that you, personally, would come out of it all right. Very generous director's fees and

expenses would be allowed to you. Lastly, the chances and changes of this world being what they are, I should ask you to leave with me a blank resignation form."

The Prince rose and moved as if to go. His Highness, however, turned to Sir William on his way out.

"You have left out bribery and blackmail," he said, "You would want me to do that for you, wouldn't you?"

"Not for a while—until you had learnt how to do it and get away with it," answered Sir William.

"I would not do it, under any circumstances," replied the Prince.

"Oh, yes, you would," rejoined Sir William. "You would not get far in business if you didn't. Why! even governments do it."

Somewhat to Sir William's surprise, the Prince and Pangloss both increased their pace towards the door through which they passed with marked alacrity. As they went out, Sir William was heard trying to get a call through to a broker in Brussels.

As the Prince and Pangloss descended in the lift, Pangloss exercised all his undoubted powers of persuasion to convince the Prince that Sir William William William was anything but typical of the business men of the City of London. They had called on him at an unfortunate time, when a board meeting had been called, explained Pangloss. Moreover, Sir William was known to be suffering from liver trouble—or heart trouble. He didn't know which, but either might have accounted for his rather strange behaviour. Markets generally were in a very unsettled state, and as Sir William carried so much on his shoulders, this factor also must be borne in mind.

The Prince, however, remained somewhat sceptical.

"Tell me something," he said to Pangloss, when they reached the ground floor. "Do these companies ever go bankrupt and have to be wound up?"

"That does occur every now and again, I fear," answered Pangloss.

"I thought so," said the Prince. "And may I ask what do these gentlemen do when that happens?"

"They merely start other companies," replied Pangloss.

The Prince thought for a while, and then commented, "It is as easy as all that, is it? Now, look here, I do not regard that scamp as a serious business man at all. What with his debenture issue, and his subsidiary company or companies, all he wanted was to get money out of us. The money he wanted to get out of us for that capital issue is to be used to pay his dividends. In plain language, Pangloss, he thought you and I were a couple of mugs, and that we should be willing to keep him going in a life of downright fraud. It seems to me that he spends most of his time doing deals with shares and even whole companies. Could you not introduce me to an honest business man?"

"Of course I can," said Pangloss. "Let us walk for a while. I have a friend whose office is about ten minutes away, and I am sure he will be delighted to see us." So saying, our two friends strolled through the City. Everywhere people, of both sexes and all ages, were darting hither and thither. There was great animation on all sides and the Prince was greatly impressed. Pangloss stressed the signs of wealth and prosperity to be seen in all directions, adding that no Athens, no Rome, no city in all the world could equal the great City of London.

Suddenly, the Prince turned to Pangloss and said, "I see banks everywhere. What do they do?"

"Principally, they lend people money," replied Pangloss. "They also do other things. We are very proud of our bankers; they are the best in the world. The whole system of banking has been reduced to a fine art. Nowhere else in the world —"

"One minute," interrupted the Prince, suspecting Pangloss of being about to make one of his eloquent speeches, which, in fact, he was. "Did you say they lend people money?"

"Yes," said Pangloss.

"That is an idea," answered the Prince, "I could do with a hundred pounds myself, if only to go on with."

"Nothing easier," said Pangloss. "Nothing easier. Let me tell you, here and now, that you can borrow money cheaper, quicker and easier, in London than anywhere in the world."

The Prince had had no time to visit the particular

bank to which he had had some money transmitted, so he looked upon this next proposed call with considerable pleasure.

"I have a great friend who is a director of one of the best known banks," said Pangloss. "I think we will call on him. You will be delighted to meet him, I am sure, and I know he will be equally pleased to meet you. It is possible that, if he is not too busy, we shall get him to talk about high finance, and you might be interested."

The Prince told Pangloss that that would suit him admirably.

"Here we are," Pangloss informed the Prince, as they stopped opposite a big white building. It was a big building. It was more than big. It was enormous. The Prince was more than surprised at its huge size when he entered the front hall. Behind an immense number of counters he saw a vast array of men and girls working like ants on an anthill. Typewriters and calculating machines were heard from all parts of the large room. Telephones were constantly ringing. There was a bustle and an activity, which Pangloss pointed out was a sure sign of the wide extent of the bank's business. Running about the hall were various tall men, attired in queer looking uniforms and wearing top hats.

To one of these Pangloss spoke in a quiet undertone. The individual so addressed disappeared behind a small door in the corner.

"That is one of the bank messengers," explained Pangloss.

This bank messenger re-appeared almost as quickly as he had disappeared, and loudly informed Pangloss, "Sir George will see you in a few minutes."

The eyes of all the clerks behind the counters were immediately fastened on the Prince and Pangloss. The Prince, however, was fascinated by the door in the corner, and was blissfully unaware that he and his companion were the cynosure of so many eyes. The door was constantly being opened and shut as people passed in and out. Presently, another top-hatted man emerged from the door, moved with stately dignity up to Pangloss, and said, also in a most audible voice, "Sir George will see you in a

minute."

More clerks entered through the small door, carrying papers, and more came out. At last, a top-hatted creature, even more impressive than all the others, having waved everyone out of the way, strolled up to the Prince and Pangloss, as though he were presenting prizes at a school speech day, and notified them that Sir George was free.

The Prince felt both relieved and abashed, and passed the remark to Pangloss, "This reminds me of the way I am sometimes received by my fellow potentates in the East."

"That is what this man is. He is a veritable potentate—of the City," responded Pangloss.

The two of them, preceded by the bank messenger, walked across the immense hall. The business of the bank almost came to an end during this procession. Typewriters and telephones all magically ceased, to be resumed after our two friends had entered the Great Presence. When the door had eventually closed behind them, the Prince found himself in a moderately-sized room, comfortably, but not garishly, furnished. At the end was a large desk, behind which was sitting a tall, well-dressed, rather good-looking man of about sixty years of age, with grey hair. On the entry of our two friends, he rose from his seat and welcomed Pangloss with marked cordiality. The great banker inquired, with evident interest, after Pangloss's health, and complained of the latter's all too infrequent visits to the bank.

Pangloss replied that he found it exceedingly difficult to get up to the City more often, as he was himself so much engaged. The Prince was then introduced. He, too was warmly welcomed, offered a cigarette, and they all sat down. In quiet, not uncultured tones, their host inquired what he might do for them.

Pangloss cleared his throat and began.

"I have brought the Prince here to-day, not only to meet you, but in the hopes that you might initiate him into some of the mysteries and intricacies of finance on the higher plane. His Highness, I ought to make clear, is a most progressive monarch, and he has every intention of

introducing into his small community all the amenities of civilization, including the system of modern banking. I am not unaware, Sir George," continued Pangloss, "That every day you deal in millions of pounds. Every day, every hour, there must pass through your bank, with its innumerable branches, sums of money that might make even the brain of a senior wrangler reel. Persons like myself can hardly visualize the range and extent of the financial wizardry which, for you, is merely normal routine. You are, I believe, not only the son, but the grandson, of a banker, and as such, this most important and difficult branch of business is literally born in you."

"That is so," said the great man, with quiet, possibly pardonable pride. "We have been bankers for several generations."

"I thought so," said Pangloss. "Your memory, doubtless, can go back over many years to the days when banks were quite small."

"If you mention that," interrupted the banker, "let me draw your attention to that little print hanging on the wall over there. That was our bank a hundred years ago, in the days of my grandfather, who was himself the son of a banker." He indicated a small picture at the side of the room, at which the Prince glanced keenly.

"Your bank in those days looks like a small shop," remarked His Highness.

"That is probably what it was," replied the banker.

"As I thought," said Pangloss, "You have seen, or at any rate are familiar with, the rise and development of these huge banking institutions from the days when they were quite small to to-day, when they assume colossal proportions. The great machine of credit and finance, one of the marvels of the world, has been largely built up by you and your forebears. Foreign exchange, itself a complete enigma to me, even gold, you handle everyday in vast sums. His Highness would like to know, and so would I, how this elaborate economic structure is maintained, intact and stable, through all the tempests by which it is constantly threatened. To-day, yesterday, and I expect to-morrow, the credit of the City of London is unrivalled. How is it achieved?"

There was a distinct, not to say dramatic, lull in the conversation, broken by the banker himself, who asked the Prince, "Are there banks in your country?"

"Well," replied the Prince. "It depends what you mean by a bank."

The banker laughed a merry but not unkindly laugh.

"Quite—quite," he said. "It all depends on what you mean by a bank. You observe, Prince, that on the very threshold we encounter a difficulty. What you would call a bank, I might not. Just tell me, do these persons calling themselves bankers in your country receive and hold money on deposit for their customers?"

"From what I have seen of them I imagine it would be most unwise to entrust them with any money at all," answered the Prince. "I never do so, myself, for fear of never seeing the money again. I, personally, use a sort of state bank run by the Minister of Finance. That is not too good, either. Nobody, not even myself, has any control over it and the fellow in charge of it does exactly what he likes."

"Exactly," replied the banker, "These people to whom you are now referring fail in the first duty of a banker, which is to pay out to his customer. That is what we call sight liability. We have never failed in that respect." He paused a moment to let his words have their full effect, and casually passed over to the Prince a copy of the bank's balance sheet.

"Observe, Prince, the manner in which we consider that is best achieved." So saying, he indicated to the Prince the enormous quantity of, what was called, liquid funds held by the bank. The Prince confessed himself much confused over this question of liquid funds and asked what they were.

"You don't know what we mean by liquid funds," said the banker. "Why—they are British Government securities of which we hold immense quantities and which are always realizable. They constitute the finest investment in the world, and with the holdings we have, we can face any eventuality."

The Prince looked at the banker with some astonishment. Having regard to his experience of the

machinery of the government, he expressed his personal opinion that if the bank's ability to meet its obligations depended on the government, the situation was anything but happy.

"I see you know nothing of finance," said the banker, rather testily. "The gilt-edged market is the basis of everything."

In an undertone to Pangloss, the Prince remarked that that made it worse.

"I would like to ask you another question," continued their host, "These bankers in your country, do they lend money to business men at moderate rates of interest?"

The Prince thought for a moment, and then said, "Well, as a matter of fact, there is far too much money lending in my country. The moment a man makes any money he proceeds to lend it out at preposterous rates of interest to some wretched farmer, who knows nothing of business, and finds himself tied hand and foot for years. Production is seriously interrupted by all this money-lending and I wish I could put a stop to it."

The banker smiled complacently. "In your country bankers actually stop production. We pride ourselves that we facilitate it." He rubbed his hands with an air of triumph as he said this. "Do your bankers exchange money from one currency to another? That is another service we do for the business community, and although it is one of our most difficult tasks, we do it almost perfectly. Without that, business would be impossible."

"In my country," replied the Prince, "everyone exchanges everything he can for anything and everything he wants. The people spend almost all their time, bargaining and exchanging instead of working."

"I can see at once," remarked the banker, "that you have not even a stable and effective currency. That is fatal. From what you have told me, Prince, I infer that all your economic, and possibly many of your political, troubles are directly traceable to the absence of a properly organized banking system."

The banker paused a moment. There was a bland smile on his face, every inch of which radiated supreme self-satisfaction. With considerable skill he had steered

the conversation to the point to which he had been endeavouring to bring it for some time. He looked sharply at the Prince as though he were a hawk about to descend on its prey.

"Within the limited time I have at my disposal this morning," proceeded Sir George, "I could do no more than outline very roughly the principles on which a sound banking system must be operated. Let me tell you at once that the principles of sound banking are the same in all countries and in all ages. Moreover, I must also tell you, these principles of sound banking take precedence over all other principles. Understand that quite plainly. I repeat, the principles of sound banking are more important than anything else." He uttered these words as though he were firing a broadside.

The Prince, distinctly shaken, mildly pointed out that he thought there might conceivably be other principles of business to be borne in mind in a well-ordered community. The banker disagreed violently with this suggestion; whereupon the Prince courteously hinted that he would not be unwilling to hear what these marvellous principles of banking were.

"I will tell you," replied the banker. "The first thing you must appreciate is this. It is both my duty and my interest to keep money circulating. I am concerned in nothing else but that. I have no other interest than the circulation of money. The moment money stagnates an unforgivable sin has been committed against the principles of sound banking. It follows, therefore, that it is immaterial to me whether businesses make or lose money. Manufacturers can make large profits or large losses. It is nothing to me. What one man loses another man makes. Here, for example, are two cases to illustrate my meaning," and picking up a bundle of papers, he continued, "I have here two companies. One is a big company and the other is quite a small one. Both companies have gone bankrupt to-day. We have lent substantial sums of money to both concerns; but, and this is most important, we are secured creditors. As such we shall get our money back, unlike all the other creditors. Now, what do I do with the money when it is returned to

us? I will tell you. It is immediately lent out to other companies, always, of course, on security. These other companies may fail too. I do not mind. We shall see our money again, and it will be immediately advanced to someone else. In this way, by the constant flow of money, first into one channel and then into another, the economic fabric of our country is maintained at its high and prosperous level. You notice, I hope, that this ever ceaseless movement of money can be achieved only by bankers. Nobody else can do this, nor should I encourage anyone else to encroach upon our special sphere. Moreover, I care not what happens in the financial firmament. War, peace, crisis or no crisis, the even circulation of money must be maintained. This very city itself may burn before my eyes. It did once, when the bombs came down, and even this building itself was laid in ruins. That had no effect on me. I set up my office elsewhere and proceeded at once to carry on my normal day to day routine, namely, the circulation of money, which is the cardinal principle of banking. Now, my dear Prince, is all that perfectly clear?" finished the banker.

"As a matter of fact," replied the Prince, after a minute's thought, "it is by no means clear; not in every respect, at any rate. There is one particular point that I cannot understand at all. May I ask you, do you do all this for nothing? I assume you come in somewhere."

The banker gave a hollow laugh.

"Oh, I come in somewhere," he answered. "I am certainly not a philanthropic institution, if that is what you think. It may dawn on you, that as money is kept constantly moving from one person to another it can only do that through our ledgers. That is where I come in. A small commission comes my way on every transaction, and in the aggregate that amounts every year to quite a nice little sum."

The Prince was about to ask some more questions, and even to mention the matter of a hundred pounds which he hoped to borrow, when a clerk entered the room.

The clerk whispered something to the banker, whose face lit up at once.

"Excuse me a moment," he said, waving his hand to

the clerk. The clerk opened the door and in marched a fair sprinkling of clerks and officials of the bank, all carrying books of accounts of approximately the same size and type. These were spread in front of the banker, who proceeded to issue a series of instructions which at first were by no means clear to the Prince, but after a while became perfectly plain.

"How long has he had his overdraft?" snapped the banker to a clerk, as he ran his eye rapidly over a ledger.

"Six months," replied the clerk.

"That is quite long enough. Call that overdraft in at once," ordered the banker, and the clerk disappeared to carry out his mission. As each clerk with an account approached the great man, this mighty personage was observed by the Prince to be calling in overdrafts from all directions. He wasted no more than a minute over each customer's affairs. The overdrafts may have been enjoyed by the customer for six, twelve, or eighteen months. They were all called in, in a most arbitrary fashion, though occasionally, with what was only a small sum of money, the banker ordered the repayment of half the amount owing. On the presentation of one ledger, a more than usually meek clerk ventured to point out to the banker that that particular customer's wife was shortly expecting a baby, and might need some money.

"What has that to do with me?" roared the banker, as though a misunderstanding might occur if he displayed any favouritism.

Just at that moment, a more important official entered, and the hitherto animated proceedings temporarily came to an end.

"How much does he want?" said the banker to this person.

The Prince did not hear the reply in its entirety, but what he did hear was this person informing the banker that "he wants a million, at least."

The Prince began to wonder who "he" was.

"This is a good illustration of what I have been telling you," casually remarked the banker. "One of our most valued and esteemed customers has come in, and wants a million pounds. I gather he is buying up a couple

of companies. Now, you realize, of course, that we cannot lend him this money unless we call in money owing to us. That is why you have just seen me calling in one or two loans to other customers, which have been outstanding for some time. You see, now, how I keep money circulating." The banker stopped, and there was a distinct lull in the conversation. The Prince decided that the appropriate moment had arrived in which to mention his personal matter.

"I should be very grateful if I might ask you something," he said.

"Certainly," replied the banker. "What is it?"

"Well," answered the Prince, "inasmuch as it is so easy to borrow money in the City, I was wondering if you could lend me a hundred pounds?"

"What!" said the banker, in evident astonishment.

"I was merely asking you if you could lend me a hundred pounds?" repeated the Prince.

"What? A hundred pounds?" came the reply.

"Yes," said the Prince. "Only a hundred pounds; if you have got it."

"Of course I have got it," thundered the banker, "of course I can put my hands on a hundred pounds. That is not the point at all. To begin with, I do not deal with such trifling sums myself. I leave all that to branch managers. There is, however, a further difficulty. You have no account here. I should expect you to bring all your business here before I started lending you money. Have you a banking account somewhere, and if so, may I inquire where it is? We are always ready to accept new customers."

As he said this, he looked keenly at the Prince not unlike a setter pointing a covey of partridges.

The Prince was somewhat nonplussed at this, and appealed to Pangloss. Pangloss began a long explanation about the Prince's personal finances, which carried the matter no further. In the midst of this discussion the Prince experienced the shock of his life.

A clerk entered the room, leaving the door wide open. Through this open door the Prince thought he saw, standing in the hall outside, no less a person than Sir William

William William. He rose at once, and intimated to Pangloss that he thought the time had arrived to depart.

"I suppose I had better look round for this hundred pounds elsewhere," he said loudly, to Pangloss, as they both began to move.

"Not at all," cried the banker. "I will give you a letter of introduction to one of our suburban managers, and if you care to go down there and lodge approved security worth at least two hundred pounds, I daresay our manager would advance you the money for six months, at the usual rate of interest."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," answered the Prince. "I am very much obliged to you, but I would rather get the money out of my Finance Minister, with all his faults."

On this, he bade the banker good-morning, and walked out, followed by Pangloss, who, needless to say, was much put out at the unhappy ending of the meeting.

Outside in the immense hall of the bank, the Prince saw the valued and esteemed customer, whose financial activities had been the cause of so many overdrafts having been called in. It was Sir William William William, and he was surrounded by a bevy of bank clerks and officials who were addressing him in every stage of ultra-obsequiousness.

"Of course, Sir William," said one clerk.

"By all means, Sir William," said another.

"Certainly, with pleasure, Sir William," said yet a third clerk.

Another bank functionary put his foot in it rather badly by politely asking Sir William if he would like his pass book.

"Certainly not," replied that individual, firmly.

An official, obviously more important than the others, rushed up to him and was heard to say to him, "When would you like it?"

"At once," rejoined Sir William.

By that time the Prince and Pangloss had reached the outer door of the bank, and they both paused a moment on the bank steps.

"As far as I can gather, Pangloss," said the Prince, "this man's wonderful banking system consists in getting

money out of poor devils who need it, in order that that scamp, Sir William, can do some more deals with shares or companies, in respect of which I do not, for one moment, imagine he will pay."

Pangloss protested strongly that this was not so, and that His Highness had completely misunderstood the position.

"I think I have understood it perfectly," said the Prince, as they entered a taxi-cab. "It seems to me that banking was far more honest in the days of that gentleman's grandfather. In those days a bank was a shop, as he himself admits, and as such, it had to please its customers to get any business. Now the boot is on the other leg. To-day the customers have to please the banker for the privilege of banking with him. Let me tell you that the grasping moneylenders and unscrupulous usurers that perpetually prey on my people are honest compared to all these financiers. Why, look here," continued the Prince, "I have not even been able to get hold of my hundred pounds."

Pangloss admitted that this was somewhat unfortunate and offered to lend the Prince a hundred pounds himself rather than he should be placed in any difficulty.

"That is the most intelligent remark you have so far made," said the Prince. "We will consider that, later. I must say I am very disappointed at these great business men. I have not seen any real business at all yet awhile. Answer me one question, Pangloss. Do you suggest that banker fellow adds to the wealth of the world?"

"What?" replied Pangloss.

"I asked you if you regarded that banker as being, what you would call, productive?"

Pangloss thereupon embarked upon a lengthy and most technical dissertation upon high finance, endeavouring to convince the Prince that what he had seen was merely a tithe of the vast range of the City's activities. The Stock Exchange, the Commodity Markets, the Insurance Companies, were all truly marvellous institutions, without which civilization could not have survived, and all contributed notably to the country's trade, industry and commerce. They were all interlocked, explained Pangloss,

and it was a great error to take too narrow a view of any one particular branch of business. In the aggregate, emphasized Pangloss, the whole immense realm of the City's varied financial activities left nothing to be desired. As a country, he concluded, we had every reason to be proud of our business men, whose unrivalled goods and services were sold, literally, all over the world, to the complete satisfaction of all concerned.

The Prince, however, was not at all convinced that everything was as perfect as Pangloss would have him believe.

"There is another aspect of this, that I have been turning over in my mind for some time," the Prince remarked, as they drove away from the City.

"What is that?" asked Pangloss.

"Well," said the Prince, "I cannot help feeling that your people, especially these business men, must get into trouble every now and again. Do they never encounter difficulties--in spite of all you say?"

"Oh, that often happens," replied Pangloss. "You have no idea of the many difficulties that occur. Sometimes these difficulties resolve themselves into quite acrimonious disputes."

"I thought so," said the Prince. "And what happens then, may I ask? Is there not someone to put it all right again?"

"Most assuredly there is," replied Pangloss, realizing at last the train of the Prince's thought. "You are thinking of the learned lawyers. They are the most intelligent people of all and we are very proud of them. Their special business is to put wrong right. The moment you are in any difficulty you have only to go to a lawyer and he will put it right for you. I am one, so I know."

"That sounds most interesting," replied the Prince. "I have heard of these people before, and I am not unaware of the high reputation they enjoy. If I may say so, they must be pretty astute to be able to straighten out the difficulties, and handle all the business of this country."

"My dear Prince, if there is one branch of human activity in which we may confidently claim the leadership of the world, it is in the administration of justice."

The Prince cut him short before he went any further, aware by now of the sort of speech he would make.

At that stage, they were not far off the Prince's hotel, and after some discussion as to what they should do on the morrow, it was decided that the Prince should visit the Law Courts. Actually, Pangloss suggested His Highness might see the Tower of London, or the National Gallery. The Prince, however, had had his appetite whetted and intimated that the architectural and artistic achievements of our community could wait until another day.

Pangloss consulted a newspaper, and discovered there was a most interesting case in the process of being heard, and that judgment, by a very distinguished judge, would most likely be delivered on the very next day. That was enough for the Prince. He announced his complete willingness to visit the Law Courts with Pangloss the next morning, and see in action that celebrated body of persons whose special business it was to put wrong right.

With that consoling reflection, he retired to his room, and Pangloss left him.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRINCE VISITS THE LAW COURTS

ON ENTERING the Prince's hotel the next morning, Pangloss was observed to be carrying a copy of "The Times."

"I have been reading an account of this case that you are going to hear," he explained to the Prince as they met in the lounge. "I think the case will be finished to-day, and we shall be in time for the judgment. I will tell you all about it as we walk down."

On that, they went into the Strand and strolled in the direction of the Law Courts, which, Pangloss pointed out, were not far away. On the way down that famous thoroughfare Pangloss proceeded to give the Prince a rough outline of the case.

"As a matter of fact, it seems rather a complicated sort of case," he said, "but I think you will be able to follow it. It would appear to be an action for damages in respect of some personal injuries. The plaintiff, that is the person bringing the case, is a well-known film actress. She is suing three defendants, and from the report in the newspaper it is not quite clear who they all are; still less is it clear what they are supposed to have done, or omitted to do. I stress the latter point, Prince, because the action is based on negligence. However, we shall soon see what it is all about when we get there."

They continued to walk on and the Prince was much interested in all he saw. Pangloss even allowed him to stop at one or two shops and buy a few things. Presently, after having to hop out of the way of more than one taxi-cab and several buses, they arrived at a large, queer-looking building, which Pangloss informed the Prince was their destination.

They entered at once, and after walking up some stairs the Prince found himself in a long corridor filled with

people. Pangloss was on the point of saying something to the Prince, when a man in a top hat, who was obviously a friend of his, tapped him on the shoulder and they got into conversation with one another. The Prince was introduced, and all three of them began to walk down the corridor. Apparently, Pangloss and the man in the top hat were very old friends, and the conversation was most animated, chiefly about their mutual friends and families. Suddenly, Pangloss turned to the Prince and started to apologize for having neglected him.

‘Of course, I was forgetting,’ he made pains to say, “I am extremely sorry. Let me take you into this court at once.”

The man in the top hat politely bade them goodbye, and the Prince was ushered through the nearest court door. Unbeknown to the Prince he had been taken into the Divorce Court. On entering, his attention was immediately focussed on to a sweet young thing, dressed in a smart coat and skirt, who was giving evidence. A tall, cadaverous-looking barrister was cross-examining her. Over the heads of various people he caught sight of the judge, who was busy taking notes. Pangloss, seeing the mistake he had made, endeavoured to guide the Prince out of the court, but His Highness thought otherwise; and, although he had to stand up, the court being crowded, he informed Pangloss that he would stay where he was, for a while at any rate.

“Now, madam,” the cadaverous barrister was heard to say, “You are counter-charging your husband with cruelty. I suggest to you that this story of yours, that your husband threw a bottle of champagne at you, one evening, is quite untrue.”

“Well, I ought to know, oughtn’t I?” replied the sweet young thing. Some stir in the court was caused by this remark, and the Prince missed hearing the next few questions and answers. The barrister, however, continued his line of cross-examination, and the next question heard by the Prince was not dissimilar to the previous one.

“I suggest to you,” the Prince heard, “that it is quite untrue to say that your husband pushed a red-hot poker into your leg?”

"You would know it all right if it was done to you," was the quick reply.

Something like a titter was heard in all parts of the court. It was loud enough to wake up an usher, who shouted out, "Silence!" right into the Prince's ear, although His Highness had made no sound at all.

At this point, the barrister changed his line of attack. Looking keenly at the witness, he put it to her in direct language that she had committed a matrimonial offence with the co-respondent on the thirteenth day of April of the previous year.

The witness adjusted her hat, smiled at the judge, and retorted, "It is an unlucky day, I admit, but it is the sort of thing that would come to my notice, if that's what you mean."

Quite a sensation was caused by this answer, and the Prince began to wonder where he was. At that moment, however, Pangloss literally dragged him out of the court into the corridor outside.

"I am extremely sorry," said Pangloss, "I have brought you into the wrong court. As a matter of fact, I have not been here for some time, and in talking to my friend, I lost the way. Follow me quickly, and we will go and hear this other much more interesting case."

"I don't know that you have brought me into the wrong court," replied the Prince, "The case was by no means uninteresting. Amongst other things, I have come here to study Political Science, and the love life of a nation is part of it. After all, without love, there is no life. The relations between the sexes is all important, if only for the prominent part they play in life generally. I should like to have heard more."

"We will discuss all that another time," replied Pangloss firmly, almost pushing the Prince along the corridor. The Prince had no alternative but to accompany his host in the direction in which he was ordered.

As they passed down several very long corridors, the Prince could not help observing a vast, mixed collection of persons of both sexes, all ages, and all types. Here and there he espied a be-wigged barrister. Some of these latter personages came up and spoke to Pangloss. He was

evidently well known to the gentlemen of the long robe. Moreover, he was clearly much respected and not unpopular with these learned men. He was greeted with considerable cordiality and friendliness by more than one of them. One barrister was particularly effusive.

"Where have you been all this time? We have missed you much," said this man to Pangloss.

Pangloss replied that he had been very much engaged elsewhere, and only came down to that part of the world on special occasions. He informed his legal friend that this was such an occasion when he was taking the Prince round the courts.

"Oh, well," replied the barrister, "take your friend to the court at the end of the corridor. Old Muddle is just about to deliver judgment."

Pangloss thanked his friend for the information, and the Prince and Pangloss walked in the direction indicated.

"By the way," said Pangloss in an undertone, "Mr. Justice Muddle is the name of the judge we are going to see. He happens to be a friend of mine. I knew him well in the days when I was at the bar. He is a most admirable judge, as you cannot fail to see."

At that moment, they encountered quite a crowd in the corridor and their passage was temporarily interrupted. There was a knot of persons grouped round a big, fat woman who was obviously in a state of much mental confusion, and actually, on the verge of tears.

"I don't know what is going to happen," the Prince heard her say to a friend. "When I saw my counsel in his chambers, he said we had very reasonable chances of winning the case. Now, he says, there is only one point wanted to win the case, and that point we haven't got,—or something like that. I don't know where we are. I cannot understand it at all. I would rather have an air raid than all this uncertainty."

The Prince heard no more of this conversation, as Pangloss pushed him gently through the crowd to the door of the court. On entering this court they walked up two or three steps at the back through a small door, and the Prince found himself inside and with the whole court in front of him. This court was not so crowded as the other

one, and they both sat down on a vacant seat in the back row but one. Moreover, on this occasion, the Prince was able to hear almost every word that was said. The judge was a little man and was almost invisible behind an immense quantity of books and papers scattered on his desk. The first few rows seemed to be filled with be-wigged barristers, one of whom was addressing the judge.

"That, I think, is the plaintiff, Miss Estelle Eridge," said Pangloss, pointing to a young lady sitting at the end of the front row of all. The Prince took a good look at her. She was quite young, smartly dressed, and undoubtedly pretty. A perpetual, not unattractive smile was on her face, and she was evidently much enjoying her case—in marked contradiction to the unfortunate woman in the corridor.

"Those people on the other side are the various defendants," continued Pangloss. "I cannot tell which is which, nor does it very much matter, yet awhile."

The Prince looked in that direction, but there were so many wigs in the way that he could see little. In the meantime his attention was drawn to the speech that was being delivered to the judge by a heavy, round-faced barrister standing immediately in front of the attractive young lady, whose affairs were clearly the subject matter of the action.

"This is the final speech for the plaintiff," said Pangloss. "He is dealing with the question of damages, I think, at this stage. Listen carefully and you will soon understand what it is all about."

The Prince did listen, and he heard the end of counsel's speech uttered with no little forcefulness and much thumping on the table.

"This great artiste has suffered grave and shocking injuries, my lord, by reason of the outrageous negligence of one or all of the defendants," said the counsel, and he went on, "It is appreciated that your lordship may well be in some difficulty in assessing the *quantum* of damages. To compensate this lady, in terms of money, for the grievous wrong she has sustained; to put her back in the position she was in before that wrong complained of occurred, is no easy task. That, my lord, I fully realize. I would,

however, like to emphasize this. This lady has been injured in her professional activities. She is, as we all know, a film star. Her very trade and business, by which she earns her living, has been definitely prejudiced. It is that aspect of this matter which makes it so serious, and which thereby increases your lordship's difficulties and, incidentally my own. Moreover, the *locus in quo* of the injury, namely the lower part of my client's right thigh, is itself a point of no little importance. I submit, with confidence, that injury to that part of the body assumes far greater proportions for a lady who is a great artiste, than it would for a lady in any other walk of life. This great lady has charmed ten thousand audiences. I doubt if she can do so again—not at any rate for some time. This great lady has fascinated the gaze of millions. This great lady has received countless offers of marriage, and made enormous sums of money, in the course of her meteoric career. Her graceful contortions upon the screen have excited the interest and captured the imagination of immense multitudes. Her slim figure has provoked the admiration of the male sex, and, I do not doubt, the envy of her own sex in all parts of the world. Her name for years has been a household word in two continents. In all the towns and cities of England and America queues of inordinate length, causing no little trouble to the police, I gather, have invariably assembled outside any picture house at which she has been appearing on the film. Wherever there has been a screen, wherever there has been a cinema, there, my lord, will the name of this great lady have been passed from mouth to mouth. The pygmies of Darkest Africa, the uncivilized tribes of Central Asia,—for all I know, the savages of remote South America, have been seen to travel, for miles and miles, by mule and camel, to enjoy a film in which this great lady is starring. So brilliant is her acting, so beautiful, hitherto,—I stress 'hitherto'—her body, that something like devotion has been vouchsafed to her from an unlimited number of admirers in all parts of the world. Let there be no misunderstanding, my lord, this lady's contribution to art itself has been gravely impaired. Last, and not least of all, her fan mail has diminished. That in itself, is more

eloquent than I, of the lowered esteem in which her vast public now holds her."

He paused a moment in his peroration, apparently to draw a breath. The judge was observed taking copious notes of this last-named, most important point. The learned counsel continued, this time in a quieter tone, "This calamity, my lord, has befallen my client in the way of which your lordship is now fully aware. I say no more on that part of the case. It is on the medical testimony that I concentrate my final observations. The high standing of those medical practitioners who gave evidence, can leave no doubt, I submit, of the actual injuries sustained. The doctors are unanimous that it was the enamel from the bath that found its way into the lower part of my client's right thigh, causing it to swell most monstrously and to fester most grievously. The pain, suffering, and inconvenience for a considerable time, she has described herself in most vivid language, and must have been truly shocking. I will not dwell afresh on the details. We all sympathize with her, I know, including, I expect, your lordship. I ask for a sum in damages that will, to some extent, compensate her for what she has gone through in physical misfortune and for the lamentable interruption in her artistic career. On this latter aspect of the case much evidence has been given, and I do not propose to repeat it. It is enough that I leave this matter in your lordship's hands, confident of a verdict in the plaintiff's favour, with such damages as your lordship thinks proper."

The learned counsel sat down dramatically, and received the sweetest smile from his client. The little judge adjusted his glasses, shuffled his papers, and cleared his throat. All eyes were turned upon him, a fact of which he seemed blissfully unaware. He surveyed the court, and the feminine plaintiff in particular, with, what can only be described as, judicial relish, and then began his judgment.

"In this case," he said, "the plaintiff, a well-known film star, comes before the court and asks for damages to compensate her in respect of certain personal injuries which she alleges she has sustained by reason of the negligence of one, or more, or all of the defendants, of whom there are three. Each and all of the defendants

deny the negligence, and charge her with contributory negligence. Now, there is one preliminary point of which I should like to dispose at once. There is a well established legal principle that the law takes no account of trifles. I should very much like to be able to get rid of this case on that ground. Having regard to the sex of the plaintiff, and the part of the body injured, a part, whose existence in polite society is ignored, I might well regard the whole matter as a trifle, unworthy of judicial notice. As such, the case would be dismissed with costs."

The judge paused a moment, doubtless in the hopes that his point would strike home in the right quarter, which it did. There was very nearly a scene. The lady in question, accustomed to the admiration of the world, on hearing herself and her anatomy referred to as a trifle, was very much put out. A considerable amount of noise and a general commotion was heard in her part of the court. It came to an end with the judge resuming his remarks.

"I think, however, I must entertain the case," he continued, "if only by reason of the alleged injury to the plaintiff in the way of her business and profession, a point admirably, and may I say, properly argued by her counsel."

The judge paused again as if to remind all and sundry of his immense powers.

"Now, the facts of the case are, in my view, reasonably clear," he proceeded. "They can be quite shortly summarized. At the material time, the plaintiff rented a flat in the West End of London from the first named defendants, who are a limited company. On the evening in question, between six and seven o'clock, she indulged in the legitimate luxury of a bath. During the course of this bath, and in the process of actual bathing, she appears to have slid down the side of the bath, and some of the skin on the lower portion of her right thigh was torn. Into this injured part of her body, a small portion of the enamel from the bath entered, resulting in a festering wound which subsequently swelled up to formidable, and doubtless most uncomfortable proportions. I can quite appreciate that her artistic activities were much hampered by this unfortunate accident, and in fact, her career as a film star, for all practical purposes, came to an end for some time.

On that set of facts she sues the owners of the flat in negligence, for having supplied her with a bath that was defective and caused her specific injury. She also sues the manufacturers of the bath and the manufacturers of the enamel. They are, respectively, the second and third named defendants, and against them also she alleges negligence in varying forms. Now, inasmuch as I accept the medical evidence concerning the actual hurt to the lower part of her thigh, I consider the plaintiff's case to be one of "*res ipsa loquitur*." That is to say, if proper care and reasonable business efficiency had been displayed by all the defendants, this regrettable incident would never have occurred. I hold, without hesitation, that one or all of the defendants must have been negligent at some time or other, otherwise the plaintiff would never have suffered this injury. The difficulty, however, does not stop there. The defendants reply that the plaintiff contributed to the accident by her own negligence. This, I may say, is the real issue in the case, and the acts of contributory negligence laid against the plaintiff are varied, interesting, and possibly bizarre. She was cross-examined at great length by all the counsel for the defendants, in support of this contention, and a positively extraordinary state of affairs was disclosed. It has been established, to my satisfaction, that the bathroom had been furnished by the plaintiff herself in a most elaborate and, I imagine, costly fashion. It transpired from the plaintiff's own evidence that this bathroom must be unlike all other bathrooms; unlike even the refined and exquisitely comfortable baths so popular in ancient Rome, and with which learned counsel and myself are familiar through the pages of more than one classical writer. The decor alone is reported to be exotic in the extreme. On the frieze of this bathroom is said to be portrayed a beautiful Athenian mead in which merrily gambol adolescent persons of both sexes in a state of complete and carefree nudity. Furthermore, it would appear that this sumptuous apartment, designed by the plaintiff herself, possesses amenities rarely discovered in such a place. I was told, for example, that on the pressing of a button, a tray from the wall instantly appears complete with cocktails, biscuits, and small sausages. Another

button produces cigarettes, and if the bather so desires, olives and cakes. Immediately in front of the bath there is a television screen upon which it is possible to enjoy, while bathing, the programme from that source. A switch by the side of the bath turns on a wireless. Two telephones are installed within convenient range. On one telephone the plaintiff communicates with her maid ; on the other, with the outside world. There is even a dictaphone on a small table, enabling the plaintiff, if she desires, to dispose of correspondence while in the act of bathing. Needless to say, as it is a feminine bathroom, there are other accessories, such as innumerable mirrors and small tables covered with cosmetics and powders of all kinds. The suggestion was even thrown out that there was a special type of microphone somewhere in the room, permitting the plaintiff to interview a journalist, if such a person should call—an event which I am given to understand occurs frequently."

At this moment the judge paused and drank a glass of water. The Prince took the opportunity to turn to Pangloss and say to him, "What does this all mean?"

"Don't you understand it?" replied Pangloss.

"Not one word," said the Prince.

"Listen more carefully and you will," answered Pangloss, testily. As a member of the bar he was following the judgment with great interest.

The judge continued.

"The defendants, in seeking to make out contributory negligence on the part of the plaintiff, rely on certain matters with which I must now deal. On the night in question, it is contended, the plaintiff was availing herself of these extravagant and extensive amenities in a manner that was in itself negligent and was the real cause of the accident. By cross-examination and evidence to which I will advert later, I am invited to believe that in the process of bathing the plaintiff was simultaneously sipping a cocktail, listening to the wireless, observing the television screen, and talking at length to a friend on the telephone. Her answers on this part of the case raise some strong probability that she was absorbed in some, at any rate, of these varied activities. There was some, admittedly

rather unreliable, evidence of this. The owners of the flat called their managing director as a witness. He appears to have been hovering about the front door of the flat at the time, with what motive is best left to the imagination. He is a comparatively young man and strolled, or rather lounged into the witness box. He looked at the court as though counsel and myself were not to be taken seriously. I am glad to say a short, sharp, cross-examination brought him to his senses. He had not been giving evidence for long before he admitted his sole profession or business in life was being a director of companies. I suspected that, the moment I saw him. His story is that he heard the plaintiff doing all these things at one and the same time. He asserts that the wireless was on, and that he heard a cocktail shaker in action. That, I daresay, is a sound he recognizes. Also, he says he heard the plaintiff in active conversation on the telephone, with, so he thought a member of the male sex. That I infer, aroused his jealousy. Hence, I regard his evidence with some reserve. All these activities were accompanied, so he says, by a considerable amount of splashing of water which would, of course, be consistent with normal bathing. I can only say for myself, that if this lady was in fact engaged simultaneously in all these varied activities, it would be an exhibition of ablutionary pyrotechnics unrivalled in history. There is undoubtedly some strong, inherently probable evidence that this lady was, in fact, bathing in a negligent manner, and thereby contributed to her own accident. I have this to add on this part of the case. It has been well said by more than one of my learned brothers that it is no part of the duty of a judge to moralize, and far be it from me so to do. I am bound to say, however, that the conduct of the plaintiff, on her own admissions, is open to much misunderstanding. Our Victorian grandmothers might well be shocked to hear that this lady, as a matter of regular practice, frequently holds long telephone conversations with men friends from, and in, her bath. She is not above interviewing journalists through the loud speaker microphone from, and in, her bath, airing her views on the current topics of the day. In fact, she would appear to do much, if not nearly all, of her business in, and from, her

bathroom. This is a state of affairs that casts a queer, not to say strange, light on the standards of present day morality. Let this lady know that she stands rebuked before the court, in respect of behaviour of which no judge, worthy of the name, could possibly approve."

The judge paused again to let the full effect of his words of wisdom fall on the shoulders of the plaintiff. The effect, however, was quite other than what he intended. Miss Eridge was seen to smile more sweetly than ever, as all eyes were turned on her and the representatives of the Press were observed to be taking notes with more frantic energy than heretofore.

The Prince, obviously much mystified, remarked to Pangloss, "I cannot follow that at all. He says it is not his duty to moralize and then proceeds to do so."

"That is quite usual," replied Pangloss, tactfully.

The Prince subsided into silence and awaited with mixed feeling the next spate of judicial learning.

"Now, it must be noted," continued the judge, "that if the first main, substantial act, or acts, of contributory negligence alleged against the plaintiff constitute a question of fact, the next allegation of contributory negligence is a question of law. Further, it is a point of law of no little subtlety and delicacy, in my view. It is perhaps necessary for me to mention in passing, that the second and third named defendants called only formal evidence denying the negligence, and asserting that the bath, and the enamel, were of the best quality. They, too, rely, as the first defendant does, for the most part, on the highly technical arguments presented with considerable forensic skill by their learned counsel. This second submission amounts to this: it is urged from the bar, that a bathroom fitted up and furnished in this elaborate, costly, and magnificent style is wholly unnecessary for a person in the plaintiff's position in life, and as such, and "per se" would amount to contributory negligence, if one or more of its varied amenities and conveniences were the cause, even indirectly, of the accident. In substance, counsel for the defence argue that this apartment is altogether unsuitable for the plaintiff, having regard to her style, status and rank in the social hierarchy of our country. Counsel for the plaintiff

argues, of course, to the contrary. This aspect of the dispute involved an exhaustive investigation into the plaintiff's origin and whole past career in order to establish her precise rank. Now, it is conceded that in a democratic country like ours rank is all important. Moreover, as the country becomes more and more democratic, so also does the importance of rank proportionately increase. This case is an illustration of that principle. The inquiry into the plaintiff's origin and whole life pursued into all its infinite minutiae revealed a somewhat curious history. The story begins about thirty or thirty-five years ago, the plaintiff being distinctly coy as to her exact age. At that distant period, a certain noble peer was riding haughtily across one of his vast estates in the west country, when he seems to have experienced a desire for liquid refreshment, no doubt owing to the heat of the weather. Accordingly, he stopped at a public house, and having thrown the reins to an attendant groom, he strode confidently, and I imagine thirstily, into the bar. Here, he called loudly for a glass of good English beer. Now it happened that on the other side of the bar was a barmaid, evidently of attractive appearance and engaging manners. Counsel and myself, who are men of the world, were not surprised at the outcome of this chance encounter. The eyes of the peer and the eyes of the barmaid seem to have met in a glance that conveyed only one meaning. In due course, they were married, and the plaintiff is the fruit of what, at first sight, might appear to have been an ill-assorted union. I am glad to say the peer and the barmaid lived in happiness for many years, doubtless legitimately proud of and much enjoying their daughter's brilliant screen career. The point, therefore, which I have to decide is one of difficulty, not to say novelty. An elaborately furnished bathroom such as this might be suitable for the daughter of a peer, but wholly inappropriate for the daughter of a mere barmaid. I mention one matter in passing. If this case does nothing else, it disposes of the old conundrum, "Do barmaids eat their young?" Quite clearly, that is not a universal practice amongst barmaids, because the plaintiff, the offspring of a barmaid, is before the court, hale and hearty. Be that as it may, I am called upon to determine

the rank and position in life of the plaintiff. If the plaintiff's position in life be that of her father, then a bathroom of this character would be a reasonable appurtenance for her flat, and the charge of contributory negligence fails. If, on the other hand, her position in life be related to that of her mother, then I am bound to say that an apartment fitted up in this grandiose, extravagant fashion would be quite superfluous, and there would be sure, strong, convincing evidence of the plaintiff's own negligence. After giving this controversial point most careful consideration, and bearing in mind the able arguments of counsel, I must come to the conclusion that the plaintiff's position in life is more closely related to that of her father than to that of her mother. As such, this second charge of contributory negligence is not, in my opinion, made out. Nor, I think, has the first charge of contributory negligence been established to my entire satisfaction. As I have already indicated, the conduct of the plaintiff herself is capable of much misinterpretation. Her antics in the bath would appear to be odd, not to say grotesque. To be able to indulge in all these activities simultaneously would seem to connote a nimbleness of body and versatility of mind rare even in a member of the fair sex. In the absence, however, of any direct evidence, impossible under the circumstances, of the plaintiff bathing in a manner lacking reasonable care and prudence, I must hold that allegation to fail also. The result, therefore, is that the plaintiff is entitled to succeed on the issue of liability.

"That, however, by no means concludes the matter. I now have to decide the amount of damages. In considering this question I bear in mind that the damages be such a sum of money as will, as far as possible, put the injured plaintiff back in the position she was in before the accident took place. I stress that it is a monetary figure I have to calculate. It is not suggested that the court is called upon, nor indeed would be necessarily disposed, to put the plaintiff back into the bath. I may say at once that I do not regard as either serious, or permanent, the actual injury to the lower portion of her right thigh. That, for a time, she experienced some pain and suffering is probable. It is to the possible interference with her

artistic career that I must direct my attention. In this connection, I have been informed by counsel that as a result of the accident the plaintiff has been seriously inconvenienced in two films now in course of preparation and in which she plays the leading role. It becomes, therefore, germane to inquire into the exact manner in which this lady has been caused this inconvenience and to what it amounts. In the first film, the plaintiff is portrayed galloping across the Texas plain pursued by a renegade English baronet, whose moral character is so bad that he cannot live in this, his own country. The pursuit lasts for a long time and is accompanied by many exciting incidents. Notwithstanding considerable equestrian skill to which the plaintiff lays claim, it must be assumed that she does suffer a certain amount of bumping about on the back of this horse and that it would be intensified by these injuries. I understand she does not marry the man in the end, nor does she like him. In consequence, at no stage of the film does the plaintiff come any nearer to this unattractive hero—or villain, or whatever he is—than at the very end of the ride, when, being intoxicated, he falls off his horse into a river, and she gallops on. I cannot see, therefore, that these injuries really discomfort her much in this film. It would be otherwise if the film terminated, as so many do, with a touching last scene involving the plaintiff sitting uncomfortably on the man's knee. I ought to add that the plaintiff does not gallop across the plain of Texas, not indeed does she get anywhere near it. The area in question is artificially represented on the set in the studio. In the second film, the plaintiff performs also in a chase but under quite different circumstances. She is portrayed as the daughter of a millionaire who has political ambitions and aspires to marry her to a member of parliament. One would have thought that if the millionaire had made his money by his own hard work he would have had more sense. As it is, the lady herself has other ideas. With the aid of her brother, a charming character, I imagine, she disappears from her father's mansion and makes her way across country. She has many hairbreadth escapes from an immense number of perils. She is nearly killed by char-a-bancs driven too fast, black marketeers on the

prowl for poultry, and even plain murderers. She is beset by a vast number of officials, who wish to examine her identity card, see her National Health cards, and require her to fill in various forms. At different places in her dramatic escape from her autocratic father's household she is pestered by tax collectors intent on seeing that, in their opinion, she does not possess too much. In short, she is assailed from all sides by a veritable horde of greedy parasites. After many adventures, she ends up in a den of regular thieves. They are regular thieves in the sense that they candidly admit they earn their livelihood by organized and deliberate stealing. At the very moment when one of these thieves is about to take from her what the others have left, she jumps behind a curtain and then climbs up a chimney. At the top of the chimney, under circumstances of no little drama, with the thieves in hot pursuit, she is rescued by her true lover. This person is a gallant aviator, who descends upon her by parachute from his aeroplane, grabbing her to safety literally in the nick of time. No doubt this final scene, to many, is thrilling. So pleased is her father at her lucky escape, that he permits her to marry her rescuer, and the member of parliament vanishes into an obscurity that he probably justly merits. Speaking for myself, it would seem a peculiar type of romantic ending, though at least it possesses the element of novelty, and reminds us all of the advanced stage of aeronautical science. The plaintiff, it is hardly necessary to mention, complains that in her peregrination up the chimney, the injuries about which we have heard so much, subject her to much discomfort and actual pain.

"Now, I may say that I have had enough of this case by now. I propose to award the plaintiff the sum of fifty guineas damages, which is quite sufficient to compensate her for what was no more than a slight scratch to the lower part of her right thigh. There will, therefore, be judgment in the plaintiff's favour for that sum and no more. I have only one other thing to add, and that is this: I will not go so far as to say that this is a case that ought not to have been brought; but I will say that, having regard to the extremely dubious standards of business and professional morality displayed by all persons in this case, there will

be no order as to costs."

With this Parthian shot, the judge rose and marched majestically out of court.

The departure of the judge was the signal for unrestrained hubbub to break out. One of the counsel for the defeated defendants announced his intention of appealing. His opponent ridiculed such a suggestion. All sorts of persons in the front rows got up from their various seats, talked to one another in great earnestness, and then sat down again. Many gave the appearance of having no very clear idea of what the result of the case really was. The counsel who appeared for the manufacturer of the enamel was heard to shout out angrily that it was a preposterous decision, and that he, personally, had been practically ignored throughout the case.

In the midst of this confusion, Pangloss quietly guided the Prince out of the court. As they walked down the steps at the back of the court, the Prince informed Pangloss that he was much impressed by the judge's last remark of all.

"Evidently," said the Prince, "the judge thought they were all a lot of rogues - counsel, witnesses, parties and solicitors; and consequently, should pay for all that ridiculous nonsense themselves. I must say, I am inclined to agree with him."

Pangloss was absolutely furious at this remark. By that time they had reached the corridor and the Prince sat down on a convenient, but most uncomfortable seat. Having drawn a long breath and wiped his brow with a handkerchief, the Prince turned to Pangloss and told him that he was much bewildered at the proceedings to which he had been listening.

"What!" said Pangloss, still fuming, "You don't understand it?"

"Not at all," replied the Prince. "As far as I could gather, the case was all about a peer, a bath, and a film actress. What the connection is between the three, I fail to grasp."

Pangloss, visibly much annoyed, rejoined sharply, "My dear Prince, it was a most magnificent judgment; it was quite a masterpiece. It is sure to be reported. I

regard it as a definite contribution to jurisprudence. It was most clearly reasoned, beautifully phrased, possessed that clarity of diction only met with in lawyers, and as far as I could see, carried conviction from beginning to end. I can find no fault with it whatever."

"You would say that," answered the Prince. "Unfortunately, I cannot agree with you. To begin with, you told me these lawyers put wrong right. It seems to me, they make wrong worse. I am much disappointed. I regard them as bluffers and actors. They bluff to the door of the court and when in court, they act. Furthermore, I daresay a good deal of money changes hands, on the quiet. That is all this marvellous administration of justice amounts to."

The professional pride of Pangloss was roused almost to fever heat. He embarked on a vehement defence of his profession.

The prince remained, however, unconvinced. In the meanwhile, they had passed down the corridor and the Prince saw more groups of persons all engaged in busy discussion. In one group, a be-wigged barrister was heard arguing a point with some heat. In another group he heard a quiet little man lamenting the fact that he had parted with a lot of money to his solicitor, and so far he had seen nothing for it. On all sides he observed people in various states of depression or exaltation, in accordance, so he presumed, with the way their respective cases were going.

Pangloss decided the Prince had seen enough for one morning, so he suggested that they adjourned for lunch. This suggestion was accepted with enthusiasm by the Prince, who added that the events of the morning had provoked both his hunger and thirst.

The Prince and Pangloss proceeded, accordingly, to a nearby restaurant. On the way to their lunch Pangloss continued to sing his praises in defence of the administration of justice.

"Some of the greatest and most experienced judges we have ever had," Pangloss pointed out, "have expressed the opinion that the way justice is administered in England is almost perfect."

"They would say that," retorted the Prince, "because that is what they, themselves, do every day. Has it ever occurred to you, Pangloss, that a good deal of this litigation does a lot of harm? I know what goes on amongst my own people at home, so I can guess what happens here."

"You are quite wrong," replied Pangloss, whose argumentative qualities had now been well roused. "Here in England, the administration of justice—in fact, the whole practice and profession of law in all its aspects—is better than anywhere else in the world."

"I am sorry for the rest of the world," replied the Prince. "If what I have seen this morning is the best that can be done, may heaven help all of us, everywhere. It is a grim look out, I must say. I imagine barbarism is not much worse."

"I disagree utterly and totally with everything you say," answered Pangloss.

"Never mind," said the Prince. "Here we are at the place at which I presume we are lunching."

As a matter of fact they had arrived at the restaurant towards which they had been bending their steps for some time. The two of them entered the restaurant. The Prince was hungry and Pangloss was pensive. If the truth were to be told, the respective roles of our two friends was not so much changing as being adapted to a state of affairs upon which fresh light was shining. Hitherto, it had been Pangloss who was always leading and the Prince was following. Hitherto, Pangloss had set the pace. Now he felt disposed not exactly to follow the pace of his companion, but at least to allow himself to be influenced by one clearly entitled to respect. The cause of this apparent change was not far to seek. Pangloss had suffered defeat after defeat. If it was his duty to paint England before the Prince as a happy spot in which everything was really for the best in the best of all possible worlds, he had signally failed. Up-to-date, he had not convinced his distinguished guest of the excellent condition of anything. On the contrary, some of the weakest parts of England's civilization had been laid bare in all their naked horror. But Pangloss was neither without hope nor without courage. Moreover, like many great men, he possessed the quality of straight-

forward frankness which is one of the marks of those really out of the top drawer.

Over the luncheon table he asked his friend what he would like to see next, admitting candidly that his efforts to entertain him, so far, had been a dismal failure.

"Well," said the Prince, "I would like to meet someone, or see something, that I can really admire."

Pangloss thought for a moment, and then informed his friend that he would do his best, that very afternoon, to satisfy his reasonable wish. There was quite a pause, during which they both occupied themselves with their lunch.

"Yes," said Pangloss, after the lapse of a few minutes, "I think I can introduce you to a friend of mine, who is not only a most charming man, personally, but is one of whom any community may be proud."

The Prince was delighted at this, and signaled his pleasure by announcing his intention of paying for the lunch.

"You have entertained me long enough," said the Prince. "Now it is my turn. Have whatever you like. I can assure you it is a great pleasure for me to be the host. I appreciate your dilemma, and will do my best to make it easier for you." So saying, His Highness saw to it that Pangloss was well-fortified with the best repast the restaurant could supply.

Pangloss was much touched and seemed to take on a new lease of life. By the time the cigars and port had been reached, he was in a happier frame of mind, but withal somewhat *serieux*, having regard to the business of the afternoon. At the end of the meal, Pangloss took his friend by the arm and said, "Come with me to the Temple. It is quiet and pleasant there, and I have something to say to you. We can talk there at our ease."

At that, they got up from the table and wended their way in the direction of the Temple at a leisurely pace. In due course, they arrived at this not unattractive spot in the heart of London. An atmosphere of serenity and academic quietude reigned everywhere in striking contradiction to the noise and bustle of the ever-rattling streets outside. The Prince remarked to his friend that the life

of London seemed to have come to a temporary standstill in these pacific domains.

Pangloss smiled one of his most good natured smiles, and continued to guide his friend through the alleyways towards the gardens which he knew so well, and whose distinguishing features he pointed out as they went along. His Highness was much interested, and asked many questions about the ancient buildings. Eventually, they came to a stop in Garden Court by the side of the most beautiful Elizabethan hall in England. At the top of some steps they paused a moment and the Prince surveyed with evident pleasure the neat lawns, and formal flower beds adorned with spring flowers.

"It is beautiful," said the Prince, "really beautiful; I am much surprised."

"Yes," replied Pangloss, "it has a charm of its own." He paused a moment and observing that the Prince was in a most attentive mood, turned to him and said, "Prince, I realize that what you have seen this morning is not likely to impress you very favourably. But believe me, that is not the whole story, by any means. Before you sit in judgment on the lawyers of England, you must understand what they are. To begin with, I would have you appreciate that they are in business, like everyone else, to earn a living. This they do, chiefly, out of the mistakes of others. Human nature being what it is, there is no dearth of business at any time, not at any rate for some of our legal practitioners. Let it be observed that those who practise successfully constitute a very small body of persons. The reason for this is not far to seek. To be of any real avail to a person in a difficulty, it is not only necessary to be more than actually astute, but to know things that other people don't know. It is plain that if you know how to get out of a difficulty yourself, you have no need to go to anyone to do it for you. Now, to know things that others don't know is either best achieved by keeping it from them, which is what often occurs, or by the creation of a vast number of rules and principles for the conduct of business and life generally, which no one can understand except those that create them. I should add that the state of our Statute Book, which is chaotic,

facilitates this enormously. Be under no illusion, Prince. The state of our laws today is at once so involved, so intricate, and frequently so contradictory, not to say positively confusing, that it is necessary to have a special body of persons whose sole function is to make these laws workable. Now you see one very good reason for the existence of lawyers. Fortunately, or unfortunately, this queer marriage between the mistakes of others and the incomprehensibility of the law, which gives the lawyers their daily bread, spawns many children and even grandchildren. The greater the number of statutory enactments, the greater is the chance of mistakes being made. Few know what they are doing now-a-days. The innocent as well as the guilty commit offences of various kinds, every day. Moreover, our legislators are so unintelligent that the actual wording of Acts of Parliament creates the utmost confusion, and more often than not produces results the very opposite of what was intended. You see, therefore, Prince, that under modern conditions the world could not get on for a day without lawyers."

"I see," said the Prince, "then, according to you the main duty of lawyers is to make everything simple, clear, and straightforward. From what I have seen, they merely increase the muddle, and reap much advantage thereby."

"Not entirely," rejoined Pangloss. "You must learn to distinguish between good and bad. Now, I may say at once, that in my opinion the principles of the English Common Law still remain the best in the world. It is their practical application to the daily business of life that, I admit, leaves so much to be desired. It is this day to day vending of law to the public that is open to criticism. Here I may say that the non-legal person is at the mercy of a cleverly devised system from which there is no escape. Observe, Prince, how prominent a part is played in the life of our community by lawyers. It is difficult, certainly most inadvisable, to be born, to get married, to die, without the assistance of the legal profession in some form or another. Many are the disputes about wills; unlimited are the trusts and settlements to be made in marriage; at birth itself, the lawyers may notice your existence if your arrival is likely to affect the interests of others. You

cannot buy, sell or lease a residence in which to live without consulting my profession. If you desire to float a company, sign a contract, do any business at all, even earn a living, the learned lawyers will have quite a large finger in the pie."

"I am beginning to understand it, now," interrupted the Prince. "The ideal world of learned lawyers is one in which no one can do anything at all, without getting their permission to do it first of all. Inasmuch as that permission has to be paid for, it looks to me very like a sort of tariff on life itself."

"It is not quite so bad as that," said Pangloss, "but it is something like it. That is the bad side of it all, but it has a good side. I am going to take you now to meet a friend of mine, whose chambers are quite near. I have known him all my life. He is a great man, a really great man. His personal character is of the highest. Moreover, he is a man of genuine learning. He would ennoble any profession, and would be an acquisition to any society. His charm of manner is at once apparent. His standards of professional morality are widely known and in consequence he is universally respected. We all hope he will one day be a judge. In short, he is as near the ideal of my profession as anyone you could meet."

Pangloss concluded his remarks and conducted the Prince towards a somewhat dilapidated building but a few yards away. The Prince was disposed to linger a while, and Pangloss asked him the reason.

"Well," replied the Prince, "I would like to ask you a question."

"Certainly," said Pangloss. "What is it?"

"It is this," continued the Prince. "You seem distinctly critical of this profession of which you are a member. May I ask how it comes about that you have spent so much time at the bar yourself?"

"The answer to that is easy," rejoined Pangloss. "My experiences here were part of my studies into politics and history, of which I am inordinately fond, as I expect you realize by now. A little time spent in the study and practice of law will open doors that are closed to many. My activities in this profession were of great interest to

me but I found it most difficult and unpleasant to associate myself with much that is petty and discreditable. As a gentleman, I considered I was at a disadvantage. Be that as it may, the legal mind, with its cold logic, method, quick and clear grasp of essentials, is worth acquiring. Understand this quite plainly, Prince. A legal training and experience is of immense advantage in hundreds of ways. The critical faculties of lawyers are unrivalled; their creative faculties are non-existent. It is in that respect that I quarrel with them—but I need hardly add, it is a difference of opinion of a most friendly nature. Come now, let us see if my friend is in.” And he walked onwards to the building in the direction of which they had been strolling for some time.

On arrival, the Prince saw on a large door the names of various persons painted in thick black paint.

“The man we are going to see,” Pangloss informed the Prince, “is Alexander van Robert, K.C. His family, I believe, was Dutch some generations ago. He, himself, is purely English, and you will see his name there.”

The Prince did see the name on the door, at the top. Pangloss knocked on the door which was immediately opened by a neatly-dressed clerk, who evidently knew Pangloss well, and received him with much pleasure.

“I am delighted to see you, Mr. Pangloss,” said the clerk. “What may I do for you?”

“We have come to see Mr. van Robert,” answered Pangloss. “Is he in?”

“No, he is out,” said the clerk, “but I am expecting him back at any minute now. Won’t you come in and wait?”

Pangloss said they would wait, with pleasure. Accordingly they entered the chambers and were shown into Mr. van Robert’s room. This room, the Prince observed, was fairly spacious. Its walls were lined with an immense quantity of books. In the centre was a large table covered with papers. The Prince was invited to seat himself in an armchair. Pangloss sat down, as if by instinct, on the chair facing the table and which was obviously used by the occupant of the chambers, namely, Mr. van Robert himself. The clerk retired and the Prince

began to look round the room with considerable curiosity.

"It is from here that my distinguished friend conducts his practice. It is in this room that he receives his many clients. All classes and both sexes pass through this room. Furthermore, every known type of person will sooner or later come here for advice of some sort," said Pangloss.

"It must be interesting in many ways," remarked the Prince.

"It is, undoubtedly, said Pangloss. "A doctor dissects bodies, but a barrister dissects minds. I have shown you enough already of my profession for you to realize the varied nature of the work of lawyers. In the course of their professional activities they see and hear much. Secrets of the most delicate kind are placed before them, and human nature in all its forms, both good and bad, is open to their inspection all day, every day."

Pangloss stopped suddenly, his eye having been caught by something on van Robert's table. Pangloss's behaviour, in fact, became very peculiar. The Prince saw him fix his gaze on something with great attention. Furthermore, his whole frame became intent, as though struck by lightning. His face was rigid, his eye keen, and his whole personality appeared to be concentrated upon an object which the Prince could not see, and whose features he could not even deduce. Pangloss's eye was steady, immutable, absolutely fascinated, by whatever it was that he saw. A long pause occurred and the Prince, out of deference to his friend, sank back into his armchair and said nothing.

After many minutes, Pangloss turned to the Prince and said, "Prince, we never look at other people's private papers, as you know, but —" and then Pangloss stopped, hesitant what to do and say.

"What is it?" interposed the Prince, anxious to help his friend in a difficulty.

"Well," said Pangloss, drawing a very deep breath and looking hard at the Prince. "I know van Robert very, very well. I somehow feel he would not mind. I have known him for twenty—possibly twenty-five years. I always thought he did this sort of thing. I really cannot make up my mind; perhaps, after all—" Pangloss stopped, his brow covered with perspiration.

"What is it?" said the Prince, again, this time jumping up from his chair. "What is it? What is troubling you?" he almost roared.

"Stay a minute," replied Pangloss, having partly, by supreme effort, resumed control of himself. It was then that for the first time the Prince saw that Pangloss was looking at what was only a very ordinary exercise book.

"Stay a minute," repeated Pangloss. "I see here in front of me the day to day, possibly week by week, jottings of my great lifelong friend. In this exercise book he has just put down his passing thoughts on a vast range of subjects. Can we look at it? Dare we look at it? Ought we to look at it? As he sits in this very chair receiving all and sundry, he has casually noted down his views on men and women and the world itself. Remember, Prince, that in this actual room he questions the ceaseless flow of humanity on the most intimate topics, more frankly sometimes than in the witness box itself. There is a reason for this. Many a case cannot go into court because van Robert so decides at this table."

Pangloss stopped again, still undecided whether to peruse his friend's most private thoughts. Ultimately, after what appeared to the Prince to be a great inward struggle, Pangloss said, "Come, let us read quickly. It is worth it." Whereupon the Prince and Pangloss turned over the exercise book and read as follows :

"Love will turn to hate ; but hatred never turns to love ; hence feelings of hatred are the strongest in the world."

"A celebrity is a person who is invariably late for every appointment, and when at last he has arrived, he is in a frantic hurry to get to the next."

"A celebrity frequently won't look at you ; but he (or she) would be excessively annoyed if you won't look at him (or her)."

"People invariably criticize in others the faults from which they themselves suffer most."

"It is more difficult to be a good critic than to be a creator. Creative faculties are born in one, but critical faculties have to be cultivated by careful study, and much reading."

"The first rule for a careerist is to run off the market all those likely to stand in his light. The second rule is to drop a friend when he ceases to be useful."

" Mob law is the end of all things. To prevent this exists the whole fabric of education and law, which, in our day, has completely failed."

" The upper classes may dislike one another intensely, but can unite where their interests, or their duty, require it. The middle classes cannot yet do this, as is shown conclusively by the history of the Third Republic."

" In modern times the only progress possible consists in eliminating the bad and preserving the good."

" It is from art, learning, sport, and culture, that society receives its real inspiration, never from its political leaders. This shows how second rate the last named are."

Jealousy causes more harm than anything else. The mediocre will never permit the clever to rise, for fear of showing up their mediocrity."

" Like calls to like in all walks of life. This is the one supreme principle common to everyone. Even the criminal classes are consistent in this respect."

" A sense of sympathy and compassion is one of the marks of greatness."

" Those born to lead and not to follow are very courteous to their inferiors, but never mind crossing swords with their superiors."

" The higher one rises in the social scale, the greater should be one's self-control, because of the more varied and more difficult situations with which one is confronted."

" Everything in this world comes down to the personal touch. The difficulty is that this is not always apparent, and the deductions to be drawn therefrom are gigantic; even Christianity itself may rest on this."

" A real lawyer is one who clearly understands certain fundamental principles of political science and is able to apply them intelligently to daily life."

" Descent to personalities is a sure sign of stupidity; adherence to principles is the mark of intelligence."

" More can be told by a person's voice than by any other characteristic."

" Division of the world into these so-called classes is very artificial, because where there is liberty, office boys can become millionaires and their grandsons are hereditary peers."

" Actually, it was also so. The rich are only the poor become rich. From which arises a great moral: whenever a noble duke or a silly socialist talks about his alleged class, he displays his ignorance."

" A man's business or profession should be the means, and his family and home the end, to be attained. The contrary is a bad sign because it tends to avarice and worship of self."

" An Englishman divides his business life and his social life into two sharply divided sections. There is a curtain between the two. His behaviour on the social plane need never be taken seriously, nor does he intend it to be."

" The world is governed today by the orators and the writers. This is a sign of degeneracy. Too much importance is attached to the cultivation of opinion and not enough to realities."

There is more in common between the extreme upper classes and the extreme lower classes than is realized. They know the fundamentals and hence the difficulties of life better than others."

" Whenever a man talks languidly about his experience, it is a sure sign he has not had any."

" The real differences in human beings in this world consist in differences of character, temperament, tastes and abilities. These differences are vast, and an aristocracy is useful here. It may be a good or bad aristocracy but its very existence points the way that all should try to go."

" The ambitions of women are more just than those of men. They know how far their men folk can and should go, which the men themselves frequently do not."

" The more sensitive a man is, the more clever he is ; one has only to look at the converse."

" Never crab, disparage, or insult youth as such ; it is a mark of a narrow mind and mortgages the future."

" There is a wide gulf between those who belong to the Republic of Letters and those who do not. The former can look at the world objectively, and enjoy every minute of life, no matter what their circumstances ; the latter are for the most part confined to a narrow niche of their own, which will always be narrow, no matter what their circumstances."

" The private lives of the great are of more importance than their public utterances."

" The partition between fastidiousness and fussiness is very thin. The former is high intelligence ; the latter, mere stupidity."

" The degree of civilization attained by a nation is well judged by its sense of humour. Savage, uncivilized races are humourless. The same applies to human beings."

" Dreams of equality are not only fruitless, but foolish. The world would be very dull if everyone was similar, each to each in all respects. Who would want to get married ?

"The distinction between the realist and the idealist is enormous. The realist sees the house is on fire and takes prompt steps to put it out. The idealist says it ought not to be on fire at all, and refuses to do anything. Hence, an idealist should be put in a glass case, to give us ideas, possibly; but he should never be in control."

"Women are better judges of the particular than of the general. Men are better judges of the general than the particular."

"Everything that is truly great is simple; business, strategy, art, music, poetry, men and women. From which arises a great moral. We are not intended to defeat Nature, and always fail when we try."

"Much nonsense is talked about liberty. Governments can take it away from the people, but cannot give it to them. Liberty consists in independence, and leaving others alone. Only the individual can attain this."

"All those that are born to lead and not to follow are invariably distinguished by three marks. They never talk shop in the mess; they are punctual; they never cheat at the gaming table. For them, life is a gaming table and without these life would be impossible, and what is more, not enjoyable."

"A real aristocrat thinks more of his posterity than of his ancestors."

"Those who are born in the purple can talk to all on an equality. Those that are not must look up or down."

"Endless are the efforts and innumerable are the devices to take from the so-called rich to give to the so-called poor. As these terms are purely relative, this policy is doomed to failure from the start. Its result is to impoverish everyone and enrich no one."

"There is no such thing as public wealth. The wealth of the individual is the wealth of the community. The so-called wealth of the community is in truth the indebtedness of the community. Public wealth is public liability."

"If the business of the world were left to atheists, cynics and materialists, the wheels of life would just cease to go round."

"Throughout the entire world, both of nature and human nature, there is going on, imperceptibly, a struggle for the best. With what is good—that is, good men, good women, good animals, good plants—that is obvious. They are always trying to be better. What is not so obvious is that it is going on with the bad as well. Criminals are trying to be better criminals; materialists, better materialists; atheists (if it were possible), better atheists. This is only consistent with one hypothesis; namely, that the Christian message is, in the main, correct."

"He who wishes a nebulous entity, called the State, to provide him with everything for nothing, must hand over to the State for nothing all he possesses, including his labour."

"He who thinks he can conquer the world by his personality alone commits a great error; such a person is no more than a bluffer. But he who thinks he can conquer the world without personality commits a greater error."

"It is a trite platitude that no one is indispensable. The truth is that everyone has an understudy waiting in the wings ready to take his place—from the village baker to cabinet ministers."

"The function of pride is to stop a person from falling, and not to induce him or her to rise. If it does the latter, it becomes over-weening self-glorification, and does harm to others."

"A woman should be judged by her tastes, a man by his hobbies."

"More is learnt from failure than from success."

"Mankind is, for the most part, motivated by self-interest. Fear of poverty, or hope of reward, are the mainsprings of human endeavour. But the great achievements of this world emanate from other motives; namely, love, patriotism, or desire for knowledge. He who works for gain alone is rarely creative."

"The principal fault of the upper classes is insincerity; of the middle classes, excessive criticism; of the lower classes, rebelliousness."

"There comes a stage in the life of all professional men when knowledge outside the pure technique of the subject is necessary. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, and soldiers, to reach the topmost rung of their profession, must have other knowledge. This other knowledge is knowledge of the way the world is actually built; that is, political science."

"Many are those who are perpetually telling others what to do. They are merely a nuisance. The real leaders of the world inspire others—imperceptibly."

"Woman is the creator of life; man, the creator in life; women are by nature conservative. Progress should come from men."

"All men fall into sets, or groups; beware of him who does not. He is either very good, or very bad."

"The English are, by nature, an aristocratic race. While they adhere to this principle they prosper. When they depart from it, they suffer. Oddly enough this applies to the individual also."

"Science can tell us much, but never the beginning or end of life."

"Men have a keener appreciation of the feelings of others than women have; but women have a keener appreciation of the sufferings of others than men."

"The British public does not take kindly to one who, having succeeded in one walk of life, tries to succeed in another. In this it makes a great mistake. It is conceded that versatility is not genius, but genius is always versatile."

"It is quite clear that to overdo things is the mark of a bad artist. A real artist leaves as much as possible to be inferred. That stimulates the imagination of others, and is creative."

"Most persons are the children of the age in which they live. Great men concentrate on principles that never alter."

"The conversational powers of the multitude are very limited—hence the power of easily understood words, like newspaper headlines, slogans, the cinema, and the ravings of demagogues."

"The art of memorization is being lost. Reference libraries, the wireless and White Papers are doing for the people what they ought to be doing for themselves."

"In all groups, circles, or societies, there is one person whose opinion is much respected, and to whom others listen carefully. He may achieve little himself, but he sets the pace."

"We sometimes introduce our friends to our friends for the effect they create one upon the other. It is the mark of a real host to ignore such pettiness."

"Great men will talk to anyone; but little men, only to those they think they can trust."

"Many think they have had a raw deal in this life; but if a person enjoys the love of family and friends, life has been worth it."

At that moment the clerk returned and informed them that Mr. van Robert was being detained at the chambers of another barrister, and would not be returning that afternoon.

"What a pity," said the Prince, at once. "I should like to have met him very much."

"You have missed something," replied Pangloss. "However, perhaps we shall come across him again. Let us go now, Prince, because you are dining out to-night."

So saying, they got up, and proceeded on foot to the Prince's hotel.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRINCE DINES OUT

JUST AFTER SEVEN O'CLOCK in the evening Pangloss arrived at the Prince's hotel. His Highness was ready for him, and they jumped into a taxi-cab. On the way, Pangloss proceeded, in guarded tones, to tell him something about the people he was going to meet.

"The name is Litterdale," said Pangloss. "Mr. and Mrs. Litterdale. They live in a beautiful house, and their parties are well known. As a matter of fact, their parties are too well known, if I may say so. This will only be a small party, so it will not be in the papers to-morrow. I have seen to that."

The Prince did not quite follow this, and asked his friend for some more information.

"Well," replied Pangloss, "this is not exactly the Fast Set to which I am taking you, nor is it what we call the Smart Set. It is half-way between the two. The people you will meet might be described as on the edge of everyone and everything. Arthur Litterdale, our host, is quite young; so is his wife, Josephine. He is on various Boards of Directors, and they have villas all over Europe. He must have a lot of money, and one meets all sorts of people at his house. That is why I am taking you there. You are sure to meet somebody interesting, and the dinner is bound to be good. They have an Italian chef, of whom, by the way, they are very proud."

The Prince subsided into silence and, as by now they had reached the park, occupied himself in admiring the flowers, which were at their best.

"Incidentally," remarked Pangloss, casually, "there is one thing I want to tell you. You won't mind my saying this, will you?"

"Not a bit," say what you like," rejoined the Prince.

"It is a matter of some delicacy," went on Pangloss. "Some very great delicacy; in fact, I hesitate to mention it." Pangloss stopped, and the Prince saw there was something on his mind.

"You evidently want to say something," said the Prince. "Please don't hesitate to say anything you like."

"Well," replied Pangloss, "what I wanted to say was this. I think I ought to warn you that there are certain topics which we never mention at the dinner table, especially if the fair sex is present in force, which is sure to be the case to-night. Those topics are politics, personalities, and religion. Avoid any reference to those matters, if you can."

"Certainly," answered the Prince, somewhat surprised at the mild nature of the request. "What you really mean is, that what you might regard as controversial topics had better be left alone."

"That is so," said Pangloss. "Moreover, I think you had better know that both our host and hostess have been married before, so be careful what you say."

"It looks to me," added the Prince, as an afterthought, "as though it might be rather a dull party."

"Oh, no, it won't," came Pangloss's quick reply. "Quite the reverse, I can assure you. If anything, it will be on the lively side. We may end up at a Night Club, or some similar place. In fact, I have some doubts as to whether we ought to be going at all."

At that moment the taxi-cab drew up opposite a house that, without being large, was certainly not small. The door was opened by a rather over-dressed man-servant, who proceeded to dispose of their hats and coats with much officiousness. Pangloss saw a mirror in the hall, looked at himself in it, adjusted his tie, and informed the man-servant that they were ready.

As they marched up the stairs sounds of conversation greeted them, which grew very loud as they reached the top, and were accompanied by much laughter, and rattling of glasses. It was clear to the Prince that he had misjudged the position. It was evidently going to be a merry affair.

A door was opened, and they were ushered into a

moderate sized drawing-room in which were about a dozen persons, of both sexes. In the corner, a comparatively young man, who was clearly the host, was standing behind a table from which he was dispensing cocktails. Immediately on their entrance, a tall, well-dressed, middle-aged woman advanced in their direction and greeted them with considerable effusiveness. She was the hostess, and Pangloss introduced the Prince at once.

The Prince was much struck by her appearance, which was undoubtedly handsome ; still more, by her clothes, which, on closer inspection, were extremely smart.

The Prince instantly became the lion of the party. His host presented him with a cocktail, and various persons plied him with questions about his journey from the East, and his experiences in England. His host expressed the hope that he would take advantage of all the parties now in progress, and stay some time. In the meanwhile, cocktails continued to circulate, and the conversation became more animated. The host, on handing him a second cocktail, introduced to him a very tall, young man, who, as a matter of fact, was busy talking to Pangloss.

"Positively shocking, I call it," he was saying, "Positively shocking. They have not only put him on the board, but have given him a whole lot of shares, as well. He knows nothing of business."

Pangloss, with one of his best smiles, turned to the Prince, and said, "Our friend here, Mr. George Selsey, is a stockbroker, and he is talking about an event in the City that has been widely reported in the Press to-day. You probably have not seen it. A fairly well-known man, Launcelot Bettison by name, has just been put on the board of one of our biggest companies, and nobody knows why."

"I can tell you why," interjected a short, thick-set man, joining the group. "He has an uncle, or cousin, who is a Governor, or something, in an outlandish part of Africa, and they are hoping to work another concession in that part of the world. Everything has to be worked like that in these days."

"I don't think that is the reason," replied the stockbroker, with an air of profound knowledge. "It is

much more likely to be a preliminary step to taking over that Tin Mining Company of which Bettison himself has been a director for years, and which is a notorious failure. It would be, with him on the board. That does not matter very much. What does matter, is that an amalgamation can be easily brought off with an interlocking directorship."

"Is that what you think?" asked Pangloss, who was always interested in financial gossip. "Then it would seem to be more interesting than appeared at first sight. I wish you would let me know, if you hear anything definite."

At that moment, the little group was joined by the host, who, in the process of handing round more cocktails, added, "That's not the reason. I heard the news, myself, this afternoon, in the City. I started at once to find out if there was anything in the wind. I gather, he really wants a job, and some hard cash. He is contemplating matrimony for the third time, I might mention. I don't know whom he is marrying, but he wants a few more directors' fees; that's all there is to it, I think."

The short man was evidently not much impressed with this explanation, and informed the circle that he was convinced there was more in it than that.

"I shall ring him up, personally, to-morrow. I know him fairly well," he said, and he proceeded to add various details of Mr. Launcelot Bettison's private life and career, of which he claimed to be well informed.

"There may be something in what you say, Litterdale," he informed his host. "I know for a fact he has to pay his first wife at least a thousand a year."

Considerable laughter greeted this observation, and they continued to discuss the possible implications of this appointment until the man-servant announced that dinner was ready.

The entire party made a move towards the door. As they went down the stairs, the Prince found himself by the side of his hostess, who was being addressed in somewhat loud tones by another, much older, woman.

"I call it disgraceful," said this woman into her hostess's ear. "Positively disgraceful. She was seen bathing on the Riviera, with practically nothing on—mere

scanties, I think they were, and black ones, too. Of course she got her photograph into all the papers, including the Continental Daily Mail, which is all she wanted. I simply can't bear that woman."

They reached the dining-room at that stage of the conversation, and the Prince heard no more about this lady, whose identity had not been disclosed.

The dinner table looked most attractive, with flowers, and bowls of fruit, and various other appointments laid out with obvious care. Pangloss was assigned a seat on the right of the hostess, and the Prince was invited to sit in the middle of the table. On the Prince's right hand was the elderly woman, whose forthright remarks he had just overheard, and on his left was quite a young girl, whose presence the Prince had not yet noticed. All the other guests sat down round the table and the dinner began. The host was clearly in a merry mood, and took good care to see that his butler maintained an adequate supply of liquid refreshment throughout the proceedings. Almost at once the lady on the Prince's right turned to him and said, "I suppose you have heard about it? Everyone is talking about it."

The Prince had to confess that he had not heard about "it," whatever "it" was.

"What!" replied the woman, much astonished. "The Willow girl—Daphne Willow—I am referring to. She has got hold of another creature, and is parading him everywhere. They were seen at Torquay a week ago. That is bad enough, but she actually gave a cocktail party the other day and do you know what happened?"

"I'm afraid I do not know," replied the Prince, in all innocence.

"She lives with her father, you know," continued the woman. "He is very old—a retired General, I think. She had hundreds of people there, including this new man of hers. He is a foreigner, from South America, or somewhere, and he was carrying the drinks round, and introducing people, as though he was already one of the family. Her old father, who is crippled with rheumatism, knows nothing of what is going on in his own house. Scandalous, I call it. I cannot understand how anyone

can go to such a party."

The Prince was much mystified at this, and was in some doubt as to how best reply. Fortunately for him, the hostess intervened at this moment.

"Did you see Eva at the party, yesterday?" she inquired of the woman on the Prince's right. "I caught a glimpse of her just as I was leaving."

"Eva Riddle, I presume you mean?" answered the woman addressed.

"My dear, her hat was preposterous! And as for the dress, I should think it was the year before last's," commented the hostess. "People ought not to be allowed to wear such things. It spoils the party completely."

This last remark seemed to meet with universal approval, because it was greeted with much laughter.

Not knowing who these various persons were, the Prince was much at a disadvantage, and he turned to the young person on his left, who had so far said very little. She was beautifully dressed, in a style much quieter than the others. She had pretty eyes, a charming smile, and appeared to be something of an *ingenue*. At first sight, the Prince thought her out of place in what was obviously a rather worldly company.

"I have only been in London a few days," said the Prince to her. "In fact, this is my first visit. I am enjoying it immensely. I have not seen much yet. Perhaps you can tell me some of the places I ought to visit."

"Oh, yes, I can," said the young thing. "Have you been to the 'Black Cameo' yet?"

"Whatever is that?" replied the Prince.

"It is the new Night Club," answered his young friend. "You can get drinks up to any hour. I was there last night. We may go on there later this evening. I hope we do. It is great fun, there, you know. Everyone drops in there sooner or later."

There was a slight pause in the conversation during which the Prince realized he had misjudged the position again.

"They have a special champagne cocktail quite unlike anything else. Arthur, himself—our host—was knocked

out by two of them, last time he was there. I saw him myself, so I know," the young lady continued. "They also dance the 'Green Hug' there, too. Can you do that?" she queried with much interest.

"I have never heard of it," replied the Prince, "What is it?"

"Don't you know?" answered his fair young friend. "What world do you live in? It is the thing, now. Everyone is dancing it."

His Serene Highness the Prince of Patam Patam was rapidly becoming highly embarrassed. He felt himself very much out of his depth. Neither Major Smith, who was a soldier, nor Pangloss, himself, had prepared him for eventualities of this kind. This line of conversation, however, was harmless compared with what followed next. The sweet young thing fixed her eyes on him and said, "Do tell me one thing. My brother, who is in the Army out there, tells me that people like you have several wives, and that it is part of your religion. What is it like to have several wives?"

The Prince retained his self-control perfectly. In the most polite manner possible he turned to his fair questioner and replied, "It is quite different from what you think. I ought to mention that I, myself, am quite unmarried. I happen to know, however, something about these customs. To begin with, you should appreciate that it is not a religion, in your sense of the term, so much as a way of life."

"Then you don't gallop about on horses with flowing manes, and capture women here, there, and everywhere?" she asked plaintively.

"No," replied the Prince. "Those who, for reasons of their own, do believe in that way of life carry it out; and, incidentally, adhere strictly to certain rules. For example, you go dancing every evening, and I have no doubt that you have contemplated time and time again marrying the man with whom you dance. The number of such men must be large by now, I imagine. With you, it is the will without the deed. With us, it is the deed as well as the will. Are we not more consistent? Moreover, we never change our wives. Although I hesitate to mention it,

I am given to understand that there are some of you who are not above changing your husbands as frequently as you change your frocks."

The curiosity of his fair questioner seemed to be ill-satisfied and she appeared to be about to ply him with questions again, when the situation was, to some extent, saved by Pangloss.

"I thought she rendered the part beautifully, especially in the last act," Pangloss was heard to say to his hostess. Pangloss's powers as a conversationalist were of no mean order, and a slight hush came over the company.

"Who are you referring to?" asked the host. "I am sure it is Merani La Dolca, the Spanish actress, whose acting in that new Revue, 'The Purple Pagoda,' has created a sensation."

"That is so," replied Pangloss. "In the last act she is magnificent. She is quite worthy of Light Opera, if not Grand Opera."

"The funny thing is, you know," remarked the host. "that she is divorcing her husband, or he is divorcing her, I really don't know which it is, but I know they have parted company."

"Really! Is that so? How very interesting," the lady on the Prince's right ejaculated. Whereupon the entire party became singularly enlivened. From all quarters was evinced the greatest interest in the love affairs of Signora Merani La Dolca.

"She has thrown him over for somebody else, I presume," announced the host.

"I heard something about it," the stockbroker, Mr. Selsey, casually said. "But what we should like to know is who is that somebody else."

"I think I can guess who it is," said one of the ladies. "It is that George Redwood. I have seen them together frequently."

"She wouldn't look at him," replied their hostess. "He is a socialist."

"I don't think that would matter. He is sure to have plenty of money if he is a Socialist," remarked Pangloss.

"It is not that man, I am sure," interjected the young lady on the Prince's left. "It is much more likely to be

Arthur Cheviot. He was mad on her once."

"Don't you believe it," said the host. "She would never fall for him. He wears such eccentric clothes. It is true he goes everywhere, and knows everyone, or at least he says he does. For myself, I cannot bear the man."

The party became quite excited, and everyone put forward a candidate as a new husband for the Spanish actress.

"There is that Lord somebody or other; I have forgotten his name," said a man opposite the Prince. "I saw them lunching together at the Savoy the other day."

"It would not be him, I am certain," rejoined the lady next to the Prince. "He lives in the country all the year round. She could not stand that sort of life any more than I could; not even for a peer. I imagine he is a sort of uncivilized savage."

"I happen to know him slightly," remarked the host. "He does spend most of his time in the country. He is chiefly known as the presiding genius of some Poultry Committee. I have never understood why it needs a peer to induce chickens to lay eggs."

After some considerable laughter, the man on the right of the host appeared to have had a brain wave.

"I wonder if it is that Polish fellow, Sergei Botkov. He has queer ideas on Art. I gather he spends most of his time painting nudes upside down. I suppose he has not painted her, has he?"

"Of course not," said the host. "It may be Charles la Saga, who occasionally acts with her."

"Certainly not," promptly stated a fat man, on the hostess's left. "I know him well. His cocktails are appalling. They make you bilious."

"It may be Brian Rossneath," suggested another lady. "I know she has met him, and they say he is an engineer. Did he not design some public baths up in Manchester?"

"My dear," roared the hostess. "She wouldn't look at him at the end of a barge pole. He is an absolute bore. Can you see her trailing round the country looking at baths?"

"The only one I can think of in the running," said

another man, "is Edward Morrell. He must have plenty of money. They were talking about him in connection with her, some little time ago."

"I should not think she could stand him for a week." was the comment of the woman on the Prince's right. "He is far too autocratic, and I believe he is a nonconformist. He is too fond of telling people what to do. Nobody could stand a man like that."

"I think I know who it is," said the host, again. "Was she not seen about with that baronet fellow, Sir Reginald somebody or other? He is always after actresses."

"Oh, he is a dreadful fellow," said the man on the hostess's left. "He is effeminate and fussy to a degree. He always wears special pants made from some queer material he picked up in South America. Besides, he speaks in a falsetto voice, and is a vegetarian. She wouldn't look at him, unless, possibly, she had had a little too much to drink."

"Then who is it who has captured her affections?" remarked the Stockbroker. "We really must know."

"The only man I can think of is that Guiseppe Tontorini, an Italian singer, I believe. I know he was round at her house a lot, once," said another man, on the opposite side of the table to the Prince.

"I doubt if she would get rid of her husband for him," answered the hostess. "I know him slightly. He goes in for pedicure, and moustache curlers. He is very particular about his personal appearance, which I cannot say I think attractive. Besides, he lives down in Sutton. She would never go down there."

"Perhaps she is going to marry that Sir Michael Parraget. I understand he is standing for Parliament at the next election," put in the Stockbroker again.

"I hope not," instantly added the woman on the Prince's left. "Politicians are frightfully dull."

This remark provoked the fat man on the hostess's left, who said immediately, "I am myself standing for Parliament at the forthcoming election. I shall stand as a Liberal. My father was a Liberal; I am a Liberal; I always have been a Liberal, and I always shall be a Liberal."

"That seems an extremely conservative outlook, if I may say so," said Pangloss, in answer to this pontifical oration. A fair amount of laughter greeted this remark, and the Prince noticed that at this stage the butler opened yet another bottle of champagne.

"Ah, well," added the host, "we shall know in due course, I suppose, who she will run away with. It is sure to be exceedingly exciting when the news is really out." The entire company agreed on this point, and they decided to keep one another informed as to the progress of the Spanish actress's love affairs.

In the meanwhile, the dinner was rapidly coming to an end. The Prince had enjoyed the meal, as a meal, immensely, but he was not over confident as to its sequel. He had already made up his mind not to go on to the "Black Cameo" if invited. A slight stir occurred in the direction of the hostess, and all the ladies got up and walked out of the room. As they trooped out, the lady on the Prince's left made a bee line for the hostess, whom she engaged in conversation. As far as the Prince could hear, it was about some dreadful woman who put in an appearance at a party in tweeds. "Ridiculous, she looked, my dear! She might have just come straight from the Yorkshire moors," the Prince heard her say, as they disappeared down the staircase.

The departure of the ladies was the signal for the men to gather round the host. Port, cigars, and liqueurs were produced, and after a few minutes the butler re-appeared with some excellent coffee.

The fat man who had informed the company that he was standing as a Liberal candidate returned to the charge, and said to the Prince, "I hope you will not believe the lady who said politicians are dull. I can assure you they are most interesting people when you meet them—that is, if you meet the right sort."

"That depends on what is meant by the right sort," answered the Prince. "I have met practically none of them yet, so I can hardly judge."

This was enough for the aspiring parliamentary candidate, who, without being in any way overpowering, launched out in praise of his political faith, adding more

than one detail about himself.

"My dear sir," he began. "If I could introduce you to some of my Liberal friends, you would be charmed. They are the people for you to meet. You would be bored stiff with the dry-as-dust, old-fashioned Tories, and as for the Socialists, they are impossible. We Liberals stand half-way between two extremes, and so appeal to all men and women of moderate views. What the country wants is Liberalism. I have already prepared the greater part of my election address, in which I set forth clearly these great principles. As a matter of fact, I am visiting my future constituency to-morrow, and I am booked to address a large meeting in the local Corn Exchange. I wish I could prevail on you, Prince, to come with me to the meeting. It is only thirty miles from London, and I would offer you a seat in my car with pleasure. I can promise you a most interesting day."

The Prince looked as though he would very much like to accept this courteous invitation. Before he could say anything, however, Pangloss intervened from the other side of the table.

"Forgive me," interjected Pangloss, "but I must remind you that His Highness is not here to become involved in controversial politics. In fact, I would put it higher. Judged by our standards, His Highness has no politics. Is not that so, Prince?"

"Well," replied the Prince, "I certainly belong to none of your political parties, because I have only been here a few days. Moreover, I must admit, that from the little I have seen so far, I would rather be in the happy position of having no politics."

"That is practically impossible," said the host, from the top of the table. "In these days one cannot avoid it. Every day, almost every hour, the damn politicians through Press and Radio, are pumping their ideas and propaganda at us as hard as they can go. I wish they would shut up altogether for a time."

At that moment, a young man with dark hair, and wearing glasses, sitting next to the host, burst into the conversation with considerable aggressiveness.

"I think you are all wrong. I have taken up politics

recently, and have become very interested. I am very Left, Arthur, you know," he said, addressing his host. "Very Left, indeed. I read every book I can on the subject, and I belong to several progressive societies. The meetings I attend—and I go to a good many—are most interesting. I am satisfied we are running this country all wrong."

"What on earth do you mean?" answered the host. "I am quite satisfied."

"That is where you are wrong," said the young man, replenishing his port wine glass, and lighting a cigar. "Vested interests govern this country, and wealth is in the wrong hands. I believe in a planned society. The days of *laissez-faire* and *laissez-aller* are at an end. Everything should be planned by democratic governments to give a fair share to everyone. For one thing, intellectuals would have a better chance than under existing conditions. I can't get a publisher for my book, 'Philosophy's role in a Planned Economy.' Now is that right?"

The Liberal candidate laughed heartily and informed his friend that, in a free society he could publish what he liked, and leave it to the public to buy the book or not. "But, in your planned community," he added, "you will only be permitted to publish what the government in power permits."

"I disagree," replied the young man. "You misunderstand me completely. I would have everything available for everyone, provided by the State, including Publishing Houses. Art and Culture are stifled for lack of the means of expression. Plain men and women are thwarted in their artistic and cultural development by lack of money, which is in the hands of the privileged classes. In a properly planned society that would not be so. For example, there is a girl I know in North Kensington who has just spent her fortnight's holiday in Russia. She wants to publish a book on 'Sex Life in a Communist State.' She happens to be the daughter of my fishmonger, and is very advanced in politics. I have seen her manuscript, which is absorbing; but nobody will take it, simply because she does not belong to the ruling class."

"Look here, old boy," interrupted the Stockbroker.

"I don't want to crab your passion for Art and Culture, and all that sort of thing; but would these ideas of yours help us in business?"

"They would help enormously," replied the young man. "The more cultured the people are, the greater is their productivity. Only yesterday I attended a lecture on 'Culture at a Collective Farm.' You have no idea how Art proletarianized has raised the level of production in Russia, because the workers have a higher standard of life, and hence a better outlook on life, and consequently, greater productivity."

"You seem mad on Russia," interposed their host. "I think it is a ghastly country, from all accounts. I should not like to live there. I gather there is no Stock Exchange on which to pick up a bit of money every now and again; no such things as directorships; in fact, no business of any kind as we understand it. How could I live as I do, under those conditions? Besides, my wife would loathe it. You are not allowed servants, there, I am told."

"In a planned society," replied the young man, "we allow no exploitation of man by man. That's one of our complaints against bourgeois governments. They not only permit but actually indulge in, the exploitation of the workers."

"I don't exploit my butler, not at any rate so far as I know," put in the host at once.

"I did not say you did, necessarily," answered the young man. "All I am saying is this. How do you know that he does not possess hidden talents, that if given the opportunity, might be very great indeed? Given proper opportunities under governments that do not oppress the workers, the cultural standards of the masses are proportionately raised. If it was left to me, I should like to see workers in the factories studying the biology of fertilization; girls at the looms reading about artificial insemination; both sexes, at the dinner hour, listening to lectures on fully rotted manures in large scale Socialist Agriculture. Facilities should be provided by the State for all to share all from the necessities of life—from houses and food to painting and sculpture. The cause of all the inequalities

and injustices of the Capitalist system is the business man's passion for profit. That should all be swept away and replaced by the principle of fair shares for all."

"Including, I suppose," remarked their host, "a fair share of fully rotted manure."

Loud laughter greeted this reply, the Stockbroker emphasizing that anyone could have his share. The young man was, however, in no way intimidated. He protested loudly that this was a reactionary attitude to adopt.

"We shall not stop there," he continued, helping himself to another glass of port. "As you doubtless know, we are living in an epoch of struggle between two worlds. These two worlds are opposite and antagonistic to one another. It is a struggle between the materialistic and idealistic outlook in Biological Science itself."

"What is that?" asked the future Liberal Member of Parliament.

"The best illustration I can give you," replied the young man, speaking very earnestly, "is this: all bourgeois biologists assert that parents, whether of human beings or animals, are the progenitors of their offspring. Modern Soviet science has established that germ-cells are independent of the rest of the body and form no constituent part of it. It follows that parents and offspring are in no way related to one another. Offspring are only by-products of the inexhaustible germ-plasm, and as such, parents and children are merely part of a herd or group possessing similar characteristics. From that a mighty leap forward in the whole system of genetics is achieved. It is possible to control breeding. They have even created a cow without a tail."

"And the next step forward, I presume," interrupted the Stockbroker, "is to create a tail without a cow."

At this stage Pangloss thought it was high time to intervene. He coughed loudly, complimented their host on the liqueur, and threw out a delicate hint that possibly the ladies upstairs in the drawing-room might not be averse to partaking of some of the liqueur that was so delicious.

"That is a good idea," answered their host, jumping up from his chair. "Let us go and join them."

Whereupon there was a general movement towards the

door. The young man who had been addressing them on Socialist Science seemed inclined to make some final, and even more convincing remarks on this topic to the Prince. Accordingly, as they strolled towards the door, he got as near to the Prince as possible. Pangloss, however, was too quick for him. Deftly, but firmly, he guided the Prince out of the dining-room and up the stairs, away from the queer individual whose ideas were thought, by himself, to be so progressive. Half-way up the stairs, on a somewhat commodious landing, the Prince and Pangloss found themselves alone for a minute. Pangloss seized the opportunity to whisper into the Prince's ear, "Take no notice of that young man. He is one of our 'Parlour Bolshies,' as we call them. Unfortunately, there are a lot of them about."

"I hope not," replied the Prince. "It is a poor look out for you if there are many like that running about the country. Incidentally," added the Prince, "I do not intend to go to this Night Club if I can possibly avoid doing so, without giving offence."

"That is all right," answered Pangloss. "If they wish to adjourn, later in the evening, to an establishment of that kind, we can excuse you on the ground that you have a semi-official appointment to-morrow, and must retire early. Leave it to me."

At that moment their host and others appeared marching up the stairs on their way to the drawing-room.

On entering the drawing-room the Prince observed that the company had increased in size. Four or five other persons, two of whom were comparatively young men, had evidently dropped in while the port was being circulated down below. All told, there were now about twenty persons, of both sexes and all ages, assembled in the drawing-room. The host slipped past the Prince, with no little deftness, in the direction of a cellarette in the corner, and began to dispense drinks of various kinds in all directions. For the benefit of the new-comers, a bottle of champagne was opened, with a more than usually loud pop, which seemed in some mysterious way to stimulate the conversation of everyone.

Their host was at great pains to explain that it was

for the new-comers only that another bottle of champagne had been opened, but immediately helped himself, his wife, the Prince, and everyone else to champagne. In fact, a second, and a third bottle had to be opened. The Prince noticed that Pangloss politely refused more ; for himself, he decided to compromise, and he accepted half a glass, only. In due course, everyone was drinking, and everyone was talking.

What the conversation was all about, the Prince could not at first discover. Very quickly, however, he learnt they were all talking about themselves.

"My dear," he heard his hostess almost shout to a youngish woman sitting next to her, "you know what Arthur and I are. "We are never in a place for long. Next week we go to Deauville for a few days, and then on to his new villa in the south of France. Of course we shall stop in Paris on the way, to see an advance dress show of autumn fashions. I simply must see it."

"Naturally," replied the younger woman. "How very exciting ! I wish I was coming with you. What ever you do, keep your eye open for the new top pieces made of frog-skin. I gather they are to be all the rage later in the year."

"Oh, frog-skin is it to be ? " answered Mrs. Litterdale. "I thought it was to be fish-skin. Never mind. So long as I am first in wearing it, it does not matter very much what skin it is."

A slight pause occurred here, and the younger woman looked keenly at her hostess. After a minute she remarked, with a casualness that was not very well simulated, "You will let me know, won't you, whether it is to be frog-skin or fish-skin ? "

It was the turn of the hostess to look at her guest keenly, as if to measure the amount of trust that could be reposed in her.

"I may, or may not, let you know," she replied, calmly. "Where will you be in about three or four weeks' time ? "

"I shall be up in Cumberland, staying with my sister," came the reply. A very considerable pause occurred in the conversation. After quite a while the younger woman

added, " I shall not be back in Town until after you have returned, if that is what you want to know."

Mrs. Litterdale's face lit up as if by magic. It appeared to the Prince that quite a load had been taken off her mind.

" I may let you know, my dear. Certainly, yes," prattled on their hostess. " By that time I expect I shall have been seen in the new skin on more than one occasion."

The Prince did not entirely understand this conversation, and as there seemed to be some slight tension between the women, he thought it not unchivalrous to intervene.

" You are going to Paris, did I hear you say? " said the Prince, in quiet tones, to his hostess. " How delightful. I have never been there. That will be one of my future pleasures, no doubt."

" You might, or might not, like it," retorted Mrs. Litterdale. " For myself, I am not at all enamoured of it. For one thing, my first husband lives there. He has married again, you know. His new wife is reported to be mad on clothes. It would simply infuriate me if I met her there one day, and she was wearing something smarter than I was. That really would make me jealous." She stopped speaking abruptly, and His Highness was left in doubt as to whether the subject of the conversation should be changed. He was rescued from this dilemma by two or three of the ladies, and a man or two, joining the coterie. They notified their hostess in very self-satisfied tones that they were all going to some magnificent dance on the following evening. The ladies embarked on lengthy and vivid descriptions of the clothes they were going to wear. Various details were added as to how they were going to have their hair done, their hands manicured, and their toe nails painted. The two men discussed at some length the drinks they presumed, or believed, or hoped would be available at the forthcoming function.

" I hope old Charles gives us some of his liqueur brandy," said one of the men to the other. " It is damn good stuff."

" He is sure to," replied the man so addressed. " I saw him yesterday, and I know him well enough to drop

him a hint. As a matter of fact, he has promised to let me have some half way through the evening. If you are any where about, I daresay you can have some as well."

"I shall be there all right," answered the first man. "In fact, we had better make a date of it."

"Certainly," said his friend. "Look round for me about midnight and we will adjourn together. We shall need something by that time, I expect. Dorothy Bengal is to be there, I understand. You know what she is; she weighs sixteen stone, and is pretty overpowering. If we have to lug her round we shall certainly want something to keep us going."

That matter having been satisfactorily arranged, the two men, who were comparatively young, appeared, somewhat condescendingly, to notice the presence of the Prince.

"I thought I was going to see you here," languidly remarked one of the men. "Arthur told me about you, when he rang me up this afternoon. One of the reasons why I like coming to this house is that one meets all sorts of people. Let me see," he added, apparently thinking hard, "where is it you come from?"

The Prince replied courteously, that he, in fact, emanated from Patam Patam.

"Where on earth is that?" replied the young man. "I have never heard of it."

Somewhat abashed, the Prince pointed out that it was in India.

"Oh," said the other man, "down there, is it? That is where Dick Postlethorpe was for some years—that is, until he blotted his copy book, and got into an awful mess." Whereupon, the two friends began a lengthy discussion amongst themselves, anent the affairs of this individual, by the name of Postlethorpe, who had evidently been well-known to them both some time previously. The Prince learnt that they were accustomed to have numerous drinks every day at a certain club with this man, until he had suddenly lost all his money.

"He lost it all through racing," said one man to the other. "I warned him not to do so. However, he never would take advice from me. I always thought he was a bit of a fool."

"It was worse than that, my dear chap," replied the other man. "He got the newspapers after him, in the end. That finished him, so far as I was concerned. It might have come back on me. Where is he now, do you know?"

"Somewhere down in the Cotswolds, I think," came the reply. "He is running a country hotel. Actually it is only a pub. I believe. I never see him now, and don't want to either."

At that moment, the Prince, not being desperately enamoured of the two men, drifted towards the ladies who were gathered round the hostess. They were still occupied in discussing the party to which they were all booked to go on the next day. The two men also joined in the conversation, and one of them asked the Prince if he was going to this (evidently, great) function. On the Prince replying that he was not only not going, but was quite unaware of anything whatever about it, his questioner turned away to talk to someone else. Whereupon there ensued a most animated discussion about what they were going to do, and the people they expected to meet on the following evening.

"What will you say to Monica Shirley if she turns up?" one of the ladies asked.

"I shall speak to her," promptly replied another lady.

"So will I," said one of the men. "Why not? All the fuss about her is simply because she has got hold of a third husband. There is nothing in that."

"That may be," replied the first lady. "But the way she treated poor old Eric—her second husband, you know—wasn't too good."

"I don't know," said one of the men. "They just parted company, that's all. I never found out whether she got fed up with him, or he got fed up with her. They probably had a difference of opinion. Politics, I think, caused the rift. He is a bit of a Socialist, and that didn't suit her. I am not surprised, knowing her as I do. She orders her servants about in the old-fashioned way."

"It wasn't politics that caused the trouble," answered one of the girls. "He is a bit Left, but not seriously, only for what he can get out of it. He would change to-morrow, if he thought it useful. No, my dear," she added, speaking very earnestly to the lady sitting next to her, "it was

something much more thrilling than politics that caused them to have a dust up. There is something very odd about him."

"I always thought there was something odd about her," replied her friend. "I don't think it is drink, though she does put away a great deal. Perhaps it is drugs. She looked very peculiar when I last saw her. In fact, she had very nearly reached the stage of being quite impossible. It simply must be drugs."

"Drugs, or no drugs, I shall talk to her," replied one of the men. "You hardly open a paper these days without seeing a reference to her. She is really quite famous."

The Prince looked round for Pangloss, feeling himself rather out of it. That important person, however, was busily engaged in conversation with someone in the corner of the room. Perforce, therefore, he had to listen to what was being said. The discussion maintained its animated level. It was chiefly about clothes and parties from the women, and very cynical remarks about all sorts of persons from the men. The Prince began to wonder whether these people liked anyone at all.

"Have you heard about Doris?" asked one of the girls of the man who had but recently seemed ill-disposed to talk to the Prince. On receiving a negative reply, the lady launched forth. "She is having a baby, you know," she informed him, and continued, none too quietly, "Nobody knows yet awhile, so you had better not mention it. It will be her fourth. How can she do it? I do not know. I call it almost vulgar, especially with her looks. She has gone off terribly in the last year or two. She is quite matronly, now."

The male individual addressed did not immediately reply. He gave the impression that he was trying to think hard, though with what was not entirely clear to the Prince. A supercilious sneer crossed his face as he reminded the lady that Doris (whoever she was) had a husband of a kind. Of this husband's presumed, believed, or purported activities in the lists of love, he made some particularly sarcastic comments. His amazed surprise at the forthcoming arrival of a fourth child to such a husband was made perfectly clear. A cool reference to the broad

distinction between one's activities and one's achievements in those self-same lists was obviously intended to convey to that lady that his own skill and adroitness in the amatory art was of no mean order. The lady was neither slow in appreciating the implication, nor annoyed at the criticism of the aforesaid Doris's husband, whoever that person might be. They both resolved into loud laughter, the man adding, "Who are they, anyhow, to have so many children? It is not so much vulgar as impertinent. It might even be bad form, which is worse."

The Prince was on the point of leaving this circle, when quite a stir was caused in the room by the announcement from one of the guests, that the time had arrived to move on to a Night Club.

The party had now become distinctly hilarious. Champagne corks had been popping merrily, and it would not be long before the proceedings became positively uproarious. The Prince looked round again for Pangloss, and gave him the signal that he thought it was time to retire. This strategic manœuvre, however, was not destined to be easily achieved. The entire company was loud in its protestations at the Prince's early departure. Moreover, the Prince noticed that it was those who had treated him most off-handedly who now wished him to accompany them to the Night Club. This complete change of front struck the Prince as most peculiar. It was the members of the party who had hardly noticed his existence, and indeed had almost cut him, who were particularly pressing.

"You simply must come on with us," said the young man who had but recently passed such severe criticisms on the husband of the lady whose christian name was "Doris." "We shall miss you terribly. The party will be incomplete without you. Besides, I expect the Press will be there."

The ladies were no less insistent. His young companion of the dinner table reminded him of the champagne cocktail that was so potent, and also of the "Green Hug" which she purposed dancing with him. Another lady informed him that she was just dying to do the "Tooting Bec Crawl" with him. This, the Prince was led to believe, was a conglomeration of all other dances rolled into one, and

was most exciting. There was also to be a cabaret at which there would be all sorts of funny songs and amusing jokes. If the Prince failed to understand the latter his fair informer would explain them all to him, no matter how obscure, suggestive, or even obvious, they might be.

The Prince remained adamant, and appealed to Pangloss. Pangloss, for once in a way, misjudged the temper of the company badly. In somewhat pompous tones, very unsuited to the occasion, he informed everyone that His Highness had a most important engagement to fulfil in the morning, and thus it was quite impossible for him to prolong the evening. He delicately hinted that what he called matters of high policy might be involved. This was enough to set everyone laughing and plying the Prince with questions. Giggling girls inquired of the Prince whether he was attending a conference on birth control, illegitimacy, or possibly lunacy. One of the men, who clearly had had far too much to drink, shouted out, "It will be hygiene the Prince will be discussing to-morrow. They have no drains in India. It is a barbarous place."

"Nothing of the sort," retorted another man, who claimed to be in the know. "It is pig food. There are more pigs in India than there are here, and they cannot feed them. I have a friend in the Foreign Office, so I know. The pigs can wait, Prince. Come on and dance with us," he added.

Not everyone was agreed on this point. If extra food for the pigs meant extra bacon for the breakfast table, some persons thought the Prince might be excused.

"What is the conference, or committee meeting about, that you have to attend to-morrow?" vehemently asked one of the young men. "If it is concerned with epilepsy, or education, you can take it from me they are both frightfully dull. For one thing, I don't know anything about either."

The Prince, highly embarrassed, took all this very good-naturedly. None the less, he looked at Pangloss as though he could kill him. Thereupon, Pangloss gallantly rose to the occasion. Pangloss, summoned their host, who was, at that precise moment, drinking champagne in the

corner of the room. In powerful tones, Pangloss, while professing much gratitude for the hospitality extended to them—and he was the only one to do so—repeated in firm language that it was absolutely essential for both the Prince and himself to leave at once. Furthermore, he caused it to be known that the prospect of the Prince visiting the house again was remote in the extreme, unless they were allowed to depart then and there. This clinched the matter. Their host, with much coaxing, and with the assistance of his butler who had been hastily sent for, and whose mere presence worked wonders, induced the assembled company to move in the direction of the front door. This move was accompanied by considerable chatter and noise, to say nothing of a lot of laughter about nothing in particular.

Everyone seemed to be in very high spirits and to be much looking forward to the Night Club about to be visited. One of the men confidently asserted that a certain lady whom he knew well, was sure to be performing in the cabaret, and he was willing to take bets on what she was, or was not, wearing.

"Of course," he remarked to another man walking down the stairs beside him, "it is Thursday to-night, and on Thursdays she wears practically nothing at all. If only we could persuade the Prince to come along with us, and let her know, she would probably appear really with nothing."

That seemed a very good reason for making another attempt to induce the Prince to accompany them, and the man addressed looked wistfully in the direction of His Highness. Pangloss, however, had overheard the conversation, and arbitrarily waved the young man aside. On reaching the hall on the ground floor, the Prince could not fail to observe that the excitement had almost reached fever heat. Everyone was chattering and talking, while the host, assisted by his butler, was handing coats to all and sundry. The young man who had professed such unbounded confidence in Socialism, at the dinner table, took the opportunity to buttonhole the Prince, and said to him, "Is it currency reform you are discussing to-morrow? Believe me, the notes we carry about in our pockets are

no good at all. Moreover, they constitute a cunning device by which the capitalists enslave the workers. In a properly planned society that would all be done away with. The workers would have all the fruits of production without the need of money at all."

Pangloss immediately rushed up and politely, but firmly, informed the young man that the Prince had had quite enough of politics for one evening.

One of the girls, who had heard this passage of arms, promptly interjected, "It is not currency reform, but prison reform, that you will be discussing to-morrow, Prince, I am sure. I expect you are visiting a women's prison, and that is why you are keeping it so secret," she added archly.

This provided more merriment than ever. The ladies, in particular, gave the Prince no mercy at all. From all sides, feminine voices pressed the Prince for details of what went on in a women's prison.

"How many women convicts have you got?" asked one girl.

"Do they really have nothing to eat but stale bread and water?" asked another.

"When one of them has to be hanged, do you, yourself, give the order?" inquired another young lady.

"What do they wear?" said a fourth representative of the fair sex.

Great interest was aroused by this last question. They all wanted to know the fashionable garb assumed by the feminine inmates of the Prince's prisons, during their prison life.

"Do they have different clothes for hanging, flogging, or merely eating bread and water?" inquired one girl, amidst roars of laughter. Yet another lady asked if the Prince permitted his female convicts to have their hair "permed" during their incarceration.

Amidst continued commotion, the Prince endeavoured as kindly as possible, to satisfy the curiosity of his numerous questioners.

Pangloss, observing the scene, came to his rescue. Drawing himself up to his full height, he pontifically announced, "The Prince is expected tomorrow morning

at the Foreign Office, to hear an eminent Harley Street Specialist read a paper on the Psychical Secretion of Digestive Juices in the Negro Races."

If previously there had been a lot of laughter, there was now virtually an uproar.

"Who on earth cares about the digestion of negroes?" yelled one of the men, obviously wishing to be heard above the din. "Our own digestions are not worth much in these days, so I shouldn't bother about the negroes."

"Who are the negroes?" said someone else.

"I wouldn't give them much to eat," added another man. "That would cure their digestive ailments."

Immense amusement was caused by these sallies, which were evidently regarded as the height of wit. The ladies, for their part, unanimously exclaimed that it was almost an insult for anyone to be more interested in negroes and their digestion than in dancing with them.

By that time, amidst much noise, and intense laughter from the girls, the various members of the party had jostled their way to some waiting cars outside. One individual, staggering towards a magnificent six-cylinder saloon, muttered to the Prince, "Pre-fabricated houses, or unlawful combinations in trade, I could understand, but negroes —" He got no further, as he practically fell into a car just as another man fell out of the same car, on the other side. This was considered extremely humorous by all concerned, and the whole street rang with a mixture of jeers and cheers.

Gradually, with the assistance of chauffeurs and servants from the house, each car managed to pack itself up with its human contents in varying stages of inebriation. Innumerable "good-byes" were shouted at the Prince, with many expressions of hope that he would not work too hard in the morning.

"I shouldn't overdo it, if I were you," said one of the last to leave, clambering unsteadily into a car. "The Negroes, the Prisons, and the Combinations, can all be kept waiting for a while. It won't do them any harm."

Bursts of yet more laughter emanated from the inside of the car which this personage was entering, and the Prince heard a feminine voice cry out, "They are very

old-fashioned now."

Eventually, with much banging of doors, blowing of horns, and general row, the entire party drove off in four or five enormous cars, leaving the Prince and Pangloss standing in the street.

The Prince drew a long breath, and wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"It is good to be in the fresh air again," he said. "Let us walk for awhile."

Pangloss agreed with this suggestion, and added that they might find a taxi-cab a few hundred yards away.

"I would rather walk," replied the Prince. "I want to get over it all. If that is the gay life of London, I should prefer to be at home, sipping a whisky and soda with Major Smith. His conversation is always most interesting. And, by the way, Pangloss, you know I am not going to the Foreign Office to-morrow about negroes. When you do tell a lie on my behalf, at least tell a good one. Any fool could see that you made that up on the spur of the moment. I do not compliment you on your tactics."

Pangloss was in some doubt as to how to reply. After a minute's thought he said to the Prince, "I did warn you, didn't I, that one meets a queer crowd at that house? Arthur Litterdale is a good fellow at heart, and his wife is all right, too. All the same, I admit they are an odd set."

"Odd set," answered the Prince. "Smart set! Fast set! I call them the Silly set."

"They have their good points," pleaded Pangloss. "They are a jolly set for an evening's entertainment—of a kind. I imagine they are very pleased with themselves, and like one another very much."

The Prince stopped in his walk and informed Pangloss that he did not entirely agree with this observation.

"My impression is," he said, "that they may kiss one another, but secretly they hate one another. What is more," continued the Prince, "Let me tell you this. You told me not to discuss politics, personalities, or religion. They talked of nothing else than politics, personalities, and religion. The lady on my right at dinner began to ask me about polygamy, which is a form of religion with some of us, as I daresay you know. It does not apply to me, but

that is immaterial. Taking it all in all, I think it was a dreadful evening. To begin with, I do not regard any of them as being superlatively intelligent, and at times, when they descend to personalities, they are not far short of being actually rude."

Pangloss at once pointed out that the Prince must not judge the whole of England by what he had seen that evening.

"They are only a minority, and a very small minority at that," he added. "It is true their movements and activities are chronicled at inordinate length in the newspapers. You should know that they take very good care to arrange that for themselves. Be that as it may, to-morrow, Prince, you shall dine at home, with my wife and myself. I promise you that you shall meet a very different set with us."

"That will be most enjoyable, I am sure," replied the Prince. "During the morning, you had better leave me to myself, to recover."

"I should point out," said Pangloss, "that both the ladies and the gentlemen from the circle in which you have been moving to-night, never require the mornings for purposes of recovery. They spend every evening like this."

Pangloss intimated that he was by no means enthusiastic at the prospect of leaving the Prince all alone in London; even for a brief time. At that precise moment, however, an empty taxi-cab passed by, and Pangloss persuaded the Prince to jump into it, and they drove to the Prince's hotel.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRINCE DINES AT HOME

THE PRINCE LOOKED forward to dining at Pangloss's private house with more than usual pleasure. Long before the appointed time for Pangloss to arrive, His Highness was restlessly pacing up and down his room, anxiously awaiting the arrival of his friend. More than once he despatched his personal servant to the ground floor of the hotel to ascertain if the great man had arrived. Eventually, he could wait no longer and installed himself in the porch, dressed and ready.

In point of fact, he was only called on to wait a few minutes. Pangloss arrived before seven o'clock, and the Prince jumped eagerly into his taxi-cab like a schoolboy emerging from school.

"Where do you live?" remarked the Prince. "You have never told me."

"Well," replied Pangloss, "we live on the borders of Chelsea and Knightsbridge. It is not far. It will only take us about ten minutes. I ought to tell you, by the way," continued Pangloss, "our house is very small, but it is none the worse for that. It is most comfortable, and we can dine seven or eight persons with ease. I think we shall be eight tonight. I can promise you a most excellent dinner, because my wife has prepared it all; except, of course, for the wines and cigars, which are my department."

The Prince looked forward to his evening with evident interest, if only because Pangloss was clearly in one of his happiest moods. They drove on, through the busy streets and surging crowds, until they came to a quieter part of London.

"We don't have much traffic here," said Pangloss, as they drove out of a busy thoroughfare into a neat, well-ordered square. "It is a great advantage I can assure

you. Moreover, you can park pars outside our house, which is a thing you cannot do everywhere."

At that moment the taxi-cab drew up outside a small house in the corner of the square, and the Prince was bidden to alight. Pangloss unceremoniously opened the door himself, and they both entered.

"We have no butler," said Pangloss, "though I am glad to say we have an admirable maid. Leave your hat and coat here, and we will go straight upstairs, where I expect they are waiting for us."

The Prince left his hat and coat in the hall and followed his host up the stairs. At the top of the stairs the Prince found himself ushered into a small drawing-room, beautifully furnished. He was immediately introduced to his hostess, whose appearance was as striking as her personality was attractive, a fact he was to discover after a short while.

"My wife," said Pangloss, with conscious pride. The lady so announced greeted the Prince with an easy welcome that captured His Highness at once. He saw in front of him a young girl, with an oval face, beautiful eyes, a lovely complexion, and a manner that disclosed breeding in its finest sense. She was fashionably attired, but there was no trace of affectation anywhere. Her voice was cultured, but imperceptibly so; her movements were graceful and there was something about her that denoted intelligence eminently above the ordinary. The contrast to the ladies he had met the night before was marked in the extreme.

Pangloss presented him with a glass of sherry and his hostess handed him some delicious cheese straws. These latter the Prince could hardly stop eating.

In the meanwhile, he was introduced to the other guests. An elderly man and his rather portly wife were introduced to him as Sir Stanley and Lady Illingden. The Prince observed that they were much older than the others and the explanation was not far to seek. Sir Stanley apparently was a very old friend of Pangloss's father and clearly a generation above the rest of the company. He was a little man with a round face, and was very genial. He and his wife greeted the Prince with much cordiality. He was next introduced to a Major Greentrigger, who was

obviously a regular soldier, and the Prince immediately asked him if he knew Major Smith. Major Greentrigger thought hard and gallantly for a couple of minutes at least, and then honestly admitted that although he knew many men of that name in the service, he could not definitely recall that particular Major Smith. Next he was introduced to a middle-aged lady by the name of Margaret Gerdison, who was a life-long friend of his hostess. The last to be introduced was a tall man in the middle forties, whose name was Lucien Feather. He was a member of the Bar and a personal friend of Pangloss's.

Amidst the buzz of conversation Pangloss handed round another glass of sherry and the Prince partook of some more cheese straws. The Prince sensed almost at once, a certain quality of warmth and sincerity about the gathering which made him feel very much at his ease. A trim maid slipped in unobtrusively, spoke to their hostess and they were all invited to go downstairs and dine.

The dining-room was quite small, but looked most attractive at first sight. The only lighting came from candelabra on the table, which pervaded of themselves an atmosphere of serenity that the Prince found irresistible. They all sat down, the Prince on the right of his hostess. If the dinner on the previous evening had been on a distinctly lavish scale, the meal put in front of the Prince on this occasion was quite different. There was no shortage of anything, but the Prince noticed at once a certain refinement of choice, a delightful gastronomic symmetry that he had never previously experienced. There were not many courses, but each seemed more enjoyable than the previous one, and they all fitted into an ordered whole that indicated the remarkably fine taste of the hostess.

At the head of the table Pangloss presided, talking easily and gaily, every now and again filling his guests' glasses, not with champagne, but with claret. This latter wine the Prince found extremely seductive and well-suited to what he was eating. By the time the sweet was reached, a special and truly magnificent creation of his hostess's own, the Prince felt happier than at any time since his arrival in England. In the politest possible way he complimented his hostess on her cookery, which, he informed

her, he had enjoyed so much that it was impossible for him to express his feelings adequately.

"I have never had a cooking lesson in my life," she replied.

"And you clearly do not need one," added Lucien Feather, from the other end of the table. "What a lucky chap you are, Pangloss, to have this cooking every day."

This observation was unanimously agreed to, amidst much laughter. All were of the opinion that they had had a most delicious meal. Actually, the Prince had been very much impressed in more ways than one.

From the moment that he had entered Pangloss's house, he had been struck by a general atmosphere, that he found difficult to define. There was pleasant informality, but nothing to which anyone could take exception. There was comfort in a high degree, but nothing was grandiose. There was culture without boredom. There was taste without extravagance,—which had so shocked him the night before. There was merriment without any trace of vulgarity. There was an easy grace with which he was not entirely familiar having regard to the somewhat rigid domain of his own in the East. It was clear that Pangloss was at his best in his private house entertaining with his talented and beautiful wife. The Prince made a mental note of the best place in which to judge an Englishman.

At the end of the repast they all rose and the ladies retired. Pangloss promptly produced some cigars and liqueurs and they settled themselves down again. Port wine was also circulated, and in due time, coffee appeared.

The Prince felt very much at his ease. Under Pangloss's admirable hospitality his natural shyness forsook him.

"I hope you are enjoying your visit here," remarked Lucien Feather.

"Very much, indeed," answered the Prince, "I really have not had a dull moment, thanks, I should say, to my kind host," and he smiled gratefully towards Pangloss.

"I thought so," continued Feather, "Pangloss will look after you well. You have come to us at an interesting time, in a way. I stress, in a way. It might have been better if you had timed your visit, when things were less disturbed."

"I don't know about that," said the Prince, "It may be due to Pangloss, but I have not yet seen much disturbance. In any event, it is interesting to see your country, no matter what its condition."

There was a slight pause in the conversation, as though they were waiting for the Prince. The Prince lit his cigar, and with a bland smile, guessing the minds of his friends, asked them what they wanted. They all looked at Pangloss, as their host, and after he too had lit a cigar, he turned to the Prince, and said, "Well, Prince, I expect we should all like to hear something of your life in Patam Patam. Remember, I beg of you, that we do not often have the pleasure of meeting someone from so distant a part of the world and we know nothing of the life of your people. Our friend, here, Sir Stanley Illingden is a great business man, and exceedingly interested in financial questions. Mr. Lucien Feather, one of my oldest friends, is about to stand for Parliament in the Conservative interest, and as for Major Greentripper, he would keep you up all night if you would only talk to him about the East, which he knows so well."

"That is so," said the Major so addressed, "but I have never been so far south as you, Prince. It so happens that I know nothing of your part of the world at all."

"You see," said Pangloss, "we should all be delighted if you would tell us about your country. Even the tiniest scraps of information would be of interest to us, because they would be novel."

"If I may say so," interrupted the future Member of Parliament, "tell us of your difficulties, of which I expect you have many. With your millions of subjects, and I imagine innumerable official personages to manage as well, I presume you have your hands full."

"I most certainly have my hands full," said the Prince. "In fact, when I am at home I rarely have a minute's rest. I would go so far as to say that my home is not a home like this. It is more in the nature of an office in which I am perpetually at work."

He paused a moment, and glanced keenly, but kindly, at Pangloss. "You English know what homes are. We do not. Be that as it may, you ask me about my difficulties."

Let me say at once, that I do not regard them as either very great, or as out of the ordinary. With the assistance of my resident English Officer, together with a Cabinet of a kind, we surmount most of them and get on fairly well. You should appreciate that my community is largely, if not exclusively, agricultural. As such, the principal function of the government is to maintain order. So long as a fairly wide measure of order is maintained we can work and feed ourselves."

"Forgive me for interrupting you," said Lucien Feather, "but I should like to ask you what you mean by 'order.' In this country there is much controversy as to what is meant by that term, nowadays."

"Well," replied the Prince, "I will tell you what I apprehend it to mean. We allow no riots, street commotions or general disturbances. Nothing in the nature of violence is permitted. Any collection of persons gathered together, to raid a shop, attack a gaol, or interfere with the police or any representative of my government, would be promptly dispersed, and the ringleaders, in due course, brought before the courts. These latter may be primitive compared to yours, but at least they are effective enough to preserve what, I can only describe as, general peace."

"How happy a small community can be," remarked Pangloss. "I wish it were as easy as that here."

"But why is it not as easy?" asked the Prince. "It ought to be easier with all your centuries of experience."

"It would seem that we should tell you of our difficulties," interjected Lucien Feather, with a smile, "rather than that you should recount yours. At least, you have told us something. You think that the object of order—whatever that may mean—is that people may be able to work and feed themselves. Not everyone understands that, in this country, as I well know from the constituency where I am standing and which is rampant with Bolshevism."

"Really," said the Prince, "you surprise me."

"It is so," continued Lucien Feather. "You have no idea what is going on under the surface of our country. Let me tell you, for a start, that we have vast masses of people who, in my opinion, are totally uneducated, and they

all have a vote. That is so, in spite of the immense sums of public money from rates and taxes that are spent every year on so-called education. Most of these people are half-educated, which is worse than sheer illiteracy. An illiterate man is willing to be guided by others, because he knows instinctively that he needs guidance. The mass of bewildered mediocrity we have to-day will follow anyone who shouts loud enough and offers them everything for nothing. Mere noise and naked bribery gets the votes to-day. As a Conservative, I tell people to earn their own living. As such, my terms are not attractive enough to get me the votes." He stopped a moment and looked ruefully at the Prince, and then added, "You, evidently, have no organs by which popular opinion is expressed like newspapers and public meetings."

"So far we have not reached that stage," said the Prince. "Can such things do any harm?"

There was much good-natured laughter at this, and after some discussion it was generally agreed that the future Member of Parliament should answer that question.

"Newspapers, public meetings, and the whole paraphernalia by which news was disseminated and opinion formed on matters of public interest were once very good," answered Lucien Feather. "Yes, before I was born, in the great Victorian era, I am convinced it was very good indeed. In those days, the Press was essentially honest; it was in British hands, invariably writing and thinking in terms of British interests, and, not least of all, it possessed a literary merit that was a credit to our country, and a source of education to many. No newspaper wanted to publish anything that was misleading, and the very language in which the news was presented, if at times pompous, at least attained a measure of elegance worthy of respect. To-day, all is different. The Press is bad enough; but there are other ways in which the masses are deceived, betrayed, and, in my opinion, actively corrupted. Have you any idea, Prince, of the gigantic campaign waged all day, every day, to overthrow, what is called the 'existing order of society'? Of course, in practice, this means nothing less than revolution and the destruction of our country itself. This infamous campaign, that has been

going on for years, is conducted by means that are utterly unscrupulous and wholly dishonest. Day after day, certain newspapers, financed we know not how, publish inflammatory matter that in any other age would have led to instant prosecution. Factory pamphlets urging men and women to strike on the flimsiest of pretexts are vomited forth week by week. Night after night, on hundreds of street corners and at many public and private gatherings, speeches are delivered, nay, positively yelled, that I assure you, as a member of the bar, constitute downright sedition. Nothing can be done about it. The Law officers of the Crown dare not, possibly, will not, prosecute. One member of the jury might well be a revolutionary himself, perhaps even the judge have Left Wing tendencies. Either would be fatal to a conviction and merely make matters worse."

"As I understand you," said the Prince, "what you complain of is, that a lot of agitators are perpetually inciting others to commit ordinary crimes?"

"Yes, that is so," replied Lucien Feather. "But, instead of agitators, they regard themselves as perfectly *bona fide* party politicians, and instead of 'crimes,' they consider what we should call criminal as a perfectly legitimate political policy."

"Stay a minute," said the Prince, "I do not quite follow you, although I think my knowledge of English is pretty good."

There was almost a scene at this. Everyone, including their hospitable host, was unanimous in their praise of the Prince's perfect command of our none too easy language. It seemed generally agreed, however, that Lucien Feather had not put his point too clearly. Pangloss, as host, jumped into the breach.

"Forgive me, Prince," said Pangloss. "What our friend means is this. We live in days when a very large part of our population is wholly devoted to a line of action that, if carried through, would subvert the realm itself. This large part clamours endlessly and even violently for what is frequently referred to as a higher standard of life. This they propose to achieve by a more even distribution of wealth."

"Observe at once, Prince," interjected Feather, "that, in practice, this more even distribution of wealth means crushing taxation with many evil consequences, and a higher standard of life is reached by no one, if only because character is improved nowhere."

"I am beginning to understand you," replied the Prince. "It looks to me as though you are troubled with a lot of demagogues and shady political adventurers, who hope to pick up something in a state of general confusion, which they themselves are trying to create. Believe me, I should never allow that to occur. Moreover, there is one certain test to apply in cases of this kind. What is the motive behind it all? I suspect it is a mere sordid desire for pecuniary gain at others' expense."

"That is so," said Feather. "Envy is at the back of it all. But it is worse. Insensate avarice for what does not belong to them really motivates this dreadful gang of revolutionaries and semi-intellectual doctrinaires."

"Quite," said the Prince. "Then, have we not explained what is 'order'? Order means security for property, without which there can be no order at all."

"I agree, entirely," interposed Major Greentripper. "Who wants property insecure? Only the thieves and the burglars."

"It is more difficult than that," continued Feather. "The modern politician denies that he renders property insecure, when he takes it from you, because he offers you compensation in the form of State Bonds. When these become numerous they will be valueless, so it will be robbery, all the same."

"Look here," said the Prince, "as I see it, the problem is really elementary. In all communities, large or small, there are bad persons and good persons. Whatever form the government assumes, its first duty is to suppress firmly the bad persons so that the good may live and prosper according to their individual abilities. If a government did nothing else but that, it would be quite a good government, in my opinion. The general mass of the people, if they are honest, which they usually are, would then have all the reasonable chances which the world offers them."

"Now you are advocating liberty," interrupted

Pangloss. "I have a very soft place in my heart for liberty."

"Of course I believe in liberty," replied the Prince. "My people enjoy liberty although I am regarded as a quasi-autocrat."

"Then you think that liberty and security for property are the same, and when both are preserved by the government, that is order," added Pangloss.

"Most certainly," said the Prince. "There are always a lot of rascals and bad characters about who do nothing but harm. Keep them from doing harm, and the people will have peace."

"I wish there was no more in in than that," remarked Feather. "To-day, what we call the Left Wing assails and even challenges the very fundamentals of life. Liberty, in the form of a free Press, and free assembly, they interpret as licence to take away those very liberties from all not of their way of thinking. All property they say has been stolen from them and they are entitled to take it back. They deny the right, let alone the duty, of anyone to sit in judgment on them, unless those judges espouse their particular way of thought. Business, by which we earn a living is alleged to be nothing but the exploitation of one class by another. The very means by which we earn our living is to be brought to an end; it is to be brought to an end by this crazy nationalization. Nobody even knows what this nationalization is."

"Permit me to point out to you," replied the Prince, "that I still think these difficulties can be surmounted by, what you call, common-sense. Has it ever occurred to you that all persons should be judged first of all by their character? In my courts, and indeed, in any form of inquiry, when a person's conduct and so-called political opinions come up for investigation, the first matter to look into is that person's character and whole past history. With you, it is the last thing to be considered. That is wrong, if I may say so."

"Then you think," said Feather, "that those who possess what you call a good character should enjoy a privilege."

"Most definitely," replied the Prince. "This notion

of treating everyone alike is not consistent with realities. There are vast differences in human beings. Moreover, a wise government should always reward the good and penalize the bad ; otherwise there is no advantage in being good. Remember also that this test would cover all those whose sole motive is spoilation. A robber is out of court at once."

There was quite a pause in the conversation. All seemed agreed that His Highness had said much that was interesting.

"Excuse my butting in," said Sir Stanley Illingden, who hitherto had said nothing ; " but if I may be permitted to suggest it, you have all approached this problem from a purely political point of view. I regard it from quite another angle. I look at it differently. I look at it as a business man who has to operate industry day by day."

Quite a stir was caused by this remark. Pangloss replenished the port wine glasses, and they all turned in the direction of the last speaker.

"What you are talking about now," continued Sir Stanley, "Is the never-ending trouble that is being experienced from labour. Now, understand this quite plainly, I am not unsympathetic to labour. I have been in business all my life, having started life as a produce broker in Mincing Lane. I know the working classes well. I am an employer, and in the course of my various directorships, I employ thousands of working people of all sorts. I know their difficulties better than they know them themselves. Let me say at once, that the torrent of abuse and insult to which I am frequently subjected as an employer, I just ignore. I was not an employer always. What is an employer ? He is merely an employee who has become an employer, that is all."

Sir Stanley paused a moment and lit a cigar.

"Now, I agree with much of what you have said. The ceaseless agitation and perpetual stirring up of trouble does no good whatever to anyone, least of all to the working classes. The sooner all party politics is entirely banished from industry the better."

"But just one minute," said Lucien Feather, interrupting, "How can you do that without interfering with

the freedom of the Press and the freedom of discussion ? ”

“ I said party politics should be banished from industry, by which I mean all such things should be wholly excluded during business hours. What people do in their spare time does not matter to me tuppence.”

“ It is in their spare time that I imagine all the rotten propaganda is thrown at them,” suggested Major Greentrigger.

“ I do not oppose the freedom of the Press, still less freedom of discussion,” went on Sir Stanley. “ As a young man I was not too keen on a free Press. Now, however, I think a free Press to be useful. The weapon of exposure is most effective against the financial adventurer who will always be found in the City.”

“ That is one way of looking at it,” remarked Lucien Feather. “ You look at the Press from its best angle, namely as a means by which honest people can be warned against crooks and sharks. We are thinking of the extremist Press that preaches revolution.”

“ What is revolution ? ” replied Sir Stanley, pausing for quite a while. “ Whatever it is, the people would still have to earn their living the day after the revolution ; that is quite clear, is it not ? Now listen to me for a moment. Labour I admit is out of hand and it may be that this vast stream of subversive propaganda is largely the cause of it. The Prince, I daresay, is right when he says that all these persons who stir up trouble, and advocate robbery and stealing should be dealt with by the courts. If the lawyers cannot, or will not, give us security from these creatures, they must be very bad lawyers, or the whole system is wrong.”

Both Pangloss and Lucien Feather began mild protestations at this, but Sir Stanley went on. “ I have said Labour is out of hand. It would be more correct to say that Labour is hopelessly bewildered and befuddled. It does not know where it is going, what it is doing, why it is working, or even what it wants. This, I agree, is largely due to agitators, of whom many come from the Trade Unions.”

“ Then you oppose Trade Unions,” put in Lucien Feather.

"Not necessarily," replied Sir Stanley. "Let me deal with them in a minute. Firstly, let us understand clearly what Labour is, and what it is there to do. Now the first thing Labour must understand is that it is not only there to work, but to work well. And be it observed, the better the work and the more of it, the higher the wages. Labour's first duty, therefore, is to supply labour, without which it is of no value at all. Labour's first function is to finish off what capital and brains cannot do. Capital, in the form of the shareholders, provides the buildings in which the men work, and also buys the machines and the raw materials. Capital has to shoulder the risk element, and works twenty-four hours in the day. Brains in the form of the engineers, chemists, and managers, provide the technical knowledge requisite for manufacturing the article in question. Labour does the actual work, which it can never do without capital and technical knowledge in front of it. I see nothing wrong in a working man doing a day's honest work in a well-managed, honestly-run business. To say that labour is exploited is absolute rubbish."

"You have only touched on the most important point of all," said Lucien Feather. "What about wages? I get that shouted at me every time I speak on a platform."

"Wages, my dear sir," replied Sir Stanley, "come from one source only, namely the price of the article that is sold. This, I agree, the working man never understands. I said to you just now, that the day after the revolution, whatever that may mean, the people will still have to earn a living; and moreover, they will have to earn it in a competitive world. If I were to talk to you about prices, and how they are reached, I should never stop. Let me just add this. Every single thing that a business is required to pay comes from that one source, namely the price of the article that is sold. That means that all taxes, rates, National Health contributions and wages, must be included in the price. If the worker wants higher wages, therefore, he had better abolish all these impositions, most of which, in my opinion, are not only useless, but positively harmful. They are the cause of high prices which promptly devalue the workers' wages."

"You mentioned Trade Unions just now," said Pangloss. "As far as I can see, they do nothing but agitate for higher wages for their members. Do you think that is wrong?"

"They can have high wages if they are prepared to pay high prices for what they buy; that is just what I have been saying. Trade Unions should not clamour for high wages in my opinion. That is most assuredly not their function. Trade Unions should do what they were originally intended to do. I mentioned a few minutes ago, that the better the work--that is, the more skilled a man is, the higher the wages. It is there that Trade Unions should come in. Trade Unions were once the employer's best friend. You always got a good man from that quarter. If by any chance you got a bad workman, you sent him back, and he was replaced very quickly by a good one. Trade Unions should concentrate on training and supplying the highest quality craftsmen who can be always relied on to work. That is the way to secure good wages for their members. In their present gigantic, unwieldy form, these Trade Unions are merly political rackets and do no good to anyone. I condemn, utterly, the introduction of politics in any form into industry."

"Forgive me for interrupting," said the Prince, most politely. "I know little of business as you understand it, but what you have said is most interesting. May I ask you how you think this problem of Labour should be dealt with?"

"I will tell you," said Sir Stanley. "Labour must learn to go forward, not backward. Moreover, it must be genuine progress, by which I mean getting on in life in an honest way. I said to you just now that Labour's first duty is to be labour, that is to say, to work. What is wrong in that? I know one thing. For Labour to be unemployed is dreadful. The next thing is this. Labour must be more intelligent. Instead of waging remorseless war on capital, it must co-operate closely with capital, without which it, most assuredly, will be unemployed. We must have labour on which absolute reliance can be placed, and then we can do more business because we can take more risks. For Labour to break its contract by

striking is as wrong as for me to break my contract. Labour must appreciate that it is in partnership with capital and brains, and by the co-operation of all three success is achieved, by which, I mean, profits are earned which will enable us to 'feed ourselves,' to use your language, Prince."

"That causes most of the trouble," said Lucien Feather; "the workers to-day say that profits are all wrong because they come out of their exploitation."

"Absolute nonsense," retorted Sir Stanley. "What do they want? Do they want losses? That is the only alternative, and a bankrupt company closes down and the workers are unemployed. They never understand clearly that profits are not easy to earn in a competitive world, nor that it is the margin of profit that we earn which enables us to buy from abroad what we need, like food, and raw materials, which we cannot produce in abundance here. Without profits we should literally and actually starve."

"They will never see that," said Lucien Feather. "Ceaseless propaganda has pumped into them the notion that they are being sweated by the capitalist for the capitalist."

"There is a very short answer to that," replied Sir Stanley. "I remarked, just now, that Labour must get on in life honestly. This means that Labour has yet another function to fulfil, and that is, to save money and become a capitalist itself. That is the answer to your question, and a good many other questions as well."

A slight pause in the conversation occurred here, and they all agreed that Sir Stanley had uttered a weighty statement on which more enlightenment was needed.

"I think I understand you," said Pangloss. "A certain peer died yesterday. I have forgotten his name. He died worth nearly a million, having started life in the coal mines."

"Exactly," said Sir Stanley. "He started as an employee and ended as an employer. Not all can do that, I know, but many can go quite a long way, if they try. Let that pass. The real cure for Labour's ills and troubles is for Labour to save money. Labour's supreme fault is that it has no idea of thrift. I grant you there are diffi-

culties. The working man has no bank manager and no broker. In consequence, he can do nothing with his money but spend it. If it was left to me, the employer would be obliged by law to deduct a certain percentage of his employee's wages every Friday afternoon, and invest it for him. Labour would then join the ranks of Shareholders."

"That would be a flagrant interference with liberty," said Feather.

"I admit it would," said Sir Stanley. "But it would be only a very small interference with liberty, and let us think for a minute what advantages would accrue. To begin with, there would be more capital for industry. This means at once, more factories, more machines, more production; prices will come down and the value of money be proportionately increased. This, of itself, might teach Labour what capital is and what capital does. The working man would learn the difference between profits and losses, because he would be in part dependent, like us, on dividends. As a shareholder, he would avoid strikes as a plague. In fact strikes might pass into the limbo of history. That alone would confer untold benefits on everyone, including the working classes. With capital behind him, a man would have no need for a government-controlled Health Insurance Scheme, with its irritating contributions, that are nothing but unnecessary levies. That, surely, is an interference with liberty?"

"It is an interference with liberty," replied Lucien Feather, "and the way it works in practice increases the interference a hundredfold."

"Quite," continued Sir Stanley. "It is not only an interference with liberty, but plain robbery, because the working man gets practically nothing in return for his money. With his own capital, this would all disappear. Moreover, with his capital behind him, he would be in a position to accept variations in his wages, a matter of cardinal importance to manufacturers involved in keen competition. With capital behind him, he would provide his own pension in later life, possibly educate his children in his own way; in short, be independent and really free. Last, and not least of all, the working man should own his

own house, bought out of his savings. That is the sort of politics I should like to see in industry, and nothing more so far as the working classes are concerned. That is the way to raise their standard of life. Once Labour becomes an individual capitalist, I care not on how small a scale, it has something to lose. Instantly, it learns all about your sort of politics, notably rates and taxes, and becomes a good citizen. All this talk of revolution, and distribution of wealth vanishes at once. We could then really get on with business."

A long pause ensued during which they all looked at one another and Pangloss took the opportunity to pass round the port and to light for himself another cigar.

Major Greentrigger, who had so far contributed little to the discussion, turned to Sir Stanley Illingden and said, "You said something then that touched me on a sensitive spot."

"What is that?" inquired Sir Stanley.

"You referred to people being good citizens. I know nothing of business, but I think that is the secret of all. I think what we suffer from is lack of discipline. You will only get good citizenship with discipline. It is obvious to me that there is no discipline in this country at all, now."

"I am tempted to ask you, what is 'discipline?'" interrupted Lucien Feather. "Those who talk like that often lead us to National Socialism itself," he added, with a good-natured laugh.

"I beg to differ," replied Major Greentrigger. "You can have discipline without that. In fact, State control of everyone and everything is not discipline. That seems to me to end in general anarchy. That is not discipline. Discipline may take various forms. There is, for example, military discipline, to which I have been accustomed all my life. What is that? It does not consist only in the sergeant-major shouting at the troops on the parade ground. A well-disciplined soldier, be he an officer or a man, knows how to behave on all occasions; he never takes more than he should; he never shirks his proper duty; he is never a nuisance to others; he always considers the man and the unit next to him; he is always clean and well-mannered. He should have too much pride in

himself and his regiment to be otherwise. It is not difficult to instil these elementary principles into the average soldier. Why cannot civilians absorb them also? "

"You can't talk to the working man like that in these days," replied Lucien Feather. "Somehow or other, you have got to get his vote."

"That may be," said Major Greentripper. "I said that was military discipline. But there is another sort of discipline, namely, individual discipline. We must all have some of that, otherwise we are no use at all. Incidentally, I should have thought that those who have been through one of the services should be better citizens than the others."

"It is not always so," remarked Sir Stanley. "What is known as the ex-soldier is by no means always a good worker in industry."

"I am shocked to hear that," replied Major Greentripper. "It should not be so. One would have thought that natural respect for those more intelligent than oneself, plus a real measure of genuine patriotism, both of which are innate in every good soldier of whatever rank, would produce that individual discipline that I regard as so essential for civilian life. Without that how can there be co-operation? It is that co-operation one with another in our respective spheres and using our abilities for the common good that constitute discipline in its highest sense. That is wholly absent now."

"I agree with almost all you say," interjected Lucien Feather, "but I am afraid if I talked like that to those whom I regard as my future constituents, it would get me nowhere."

There was much agreement on this, and general sympathy for the aspiring Member of Parliament. Pangloss began to move and reminded them that it was time to rejoin the ladies upstairs. The prince, however, seemed reluctant to move and said to Pangloss, "You have not told us what you think about it all. What is your view? "

Pangloss was at that moment putting the decanters on the sideboard, but he turned to his friends and replied with a broad smile, "Well, if you ask for my views on this matter, I will tell you this. I, personally, place all my hopes on the fundamental principles of English liberty."

So long as we adhere to them, I think we shall come out of it all right. It is because they have been trampled on that I see danger ahead. The greatest and most sacred of all those principles is that no one living under the British Crown should be taxed without his consent. You have never been taxed by the Whitehall Government, have you, Prince ? ”

“ No, I have not,” answered the Prince.

“ Exactly,” continued Pangloss. “ Provided the tax-payers alone fix the taxes, I see liberty preserved in all its varying forms. It is essential, that all the authority and power possessed by the Executive, including the power to levy taxes, should be controlled by those who own property, and are actually called upon to pay the taxes. The contrary brings endless difficulties. That is the first requisite, Prince, for the maintenance of that order which you consider to be the primary duty of any government. Come, now,” added Pangloss. “ Let us go upstairs, quickly. If I should start to talk about liberty, and English liberty in particular, I should never cease.”

So saying, their host quietly ushered his guests into the hall on the way to the drawing-room, taking the cigars with him.

The Prince seemed inclined to linger a minute. The little dining-room, with its quiet lighting, and pretty table with its wine glasses and bowls of fruit, was very attractive. His mind went back to his immense palace in the East, into which Pangloss’s whole house would go a thousand times. He realized fully and completely for the first time, that his visit had been well worth while.

On the way upstairs, Lucien Feather whispered to him, with a merry twinkle in his eye, “ We shall not discuss politics in the drawing-room, I think. Our hostess is an artist, and so is that friend of hers, Margaret Gerdison.”

On entering the drawing-room they were welcomed with much cordiality by the ladies. The Prince was invited to sit down in a comfortable chair by the side of his hostess. The ladies were smoking, so the Prince and Pangloss both lit another cigar. A decanter of whisky with some syphons of soda appeared, and were installed on a side table.

"What a time you have been," remarked their hostess, "I thought we should never see you,"

"We have been discussing the affairs of the nation," said Lucien Feather. "The Prince, amongst other things has been telling us a little, but not nearly enough, about his people."

"I have never been to the East in my life," Lady Illingden said, as though she were confessing a crime. "I do not even know what sort of life the people out there live."

"Well, I live a life very similar to that you do here," replied the Prince.

"I suppose you have simply masses of servants?" inquired that lady, again.

"I certainly have quite a large number," answered the Prince.

"What a blessing," said Lady Illingden. "It almost makes me inclined to visit that part of the world."

"I can assure you of a most hospitable welcome. You could stay with me, if it comes to that. I should be delighted to see all of you," said the Prince.

This remark evoked the gratitude of the entire company, and there was much happy laughter, although it was generally conceded that the prospect of accepting His Highness's hospitality was, at that moment, somewhat remote for all of them.

"I should love to come," said Miss Margaret Gerdison. "I should spend all my time painting. I understand the colours in the East are wonderful."

"You are an artist?" asked the Prince.

"I am," answered the lady so addressed.

"What a pleasure it would be to entertain an artist. I cannot recall ever having received an artist at my palace, in the whole of my life," replied the Prince.

"What!" said their hostess. "You astonish me. Surely you are a patron of Art. As a reigning Prince, that, I imagine, would be one of your most pleasurable duties."

The Prince had to confess that his Principality was so small, his revenues entirely absorbed in the welfare of his backward subjects, and his own time so limited, that the artistic and cultural development of Patam Patam had

hitherto been almost completely neglected. He spoke as it were sadly and told his hearers, in strict confidence, that one of the objects of his visit to England was to remedy this undoubted defect.

"I myself have practically no knowledge whatever of the subject," continued the Prince. "How, therefore, can we begin? We have no traditions whatever."

"That cuts both ways," said Pangloss. "You can start from the beginning."

"I don't know about that," said Margaret Gerdison. "Without all that is meant by tradition it might be very difficult to begin. There are few things in the world that so depend on tradition, as Art."

Then at once, a most animated discussion began. The Prince listened with great interest to what was said. Sir Stanley Illingden told him that he had been collecting pictures for years, and had been paying high prices for them. He did not, however, regret a penny piece spent in that way. He liked his house to be adorned with what was good.

"I thought the English people were supposed to be uncultured," remarked the Prince. "I don't say that myself, but they seem to think so, abroad," he added.

"Don't believe it," replied Pangloss. "Some of us are, I know—but not all of us, by any means."

"I think the Prince should be given some guidance in this debatable topic," interposed the hostess, and a quietude came over the room. "To begin with, we live in an age when art and culture can hardly flourish. We live in an age of machines operated by a vast proletariat. Neither is conducive to what is beautiful or creative. A hundred years ago, our ancestors travelled in a carriage and pair, or a coach drawn by six lovely horses. Who could not paint a picture from that? The horses alone might well be a dream. But what can an artist make of a modern motor-car, a motor-bus or a railway train, which is the way in which most of us have to go about in these days. The very buildings that we put up everywhere are positively ugly. The masses of the people see nothing beautiful from morn till eve. All they experience is plain houses in a row, and huge factories filled with machines. Under those

depressing circumstances, how can anyone think of anything else? I dislike the times we live in very much. I would prefer to have lived in days when other, and more attractive pursuits were the lot of us all."

"But surely," said the Prince, "those conditions do not apply to everyone. There must be some people, so placed, that they are in a position to cultivate more interesting things."

"Now you are talking," replied Margaret Gerdison, with a pleasant smile. "For art to flourish and produce of its best, there must be a large class of persons who have both leisure and money. To-day there is little leisure, and as for money, those who might be thought to be opulent are taxed out of existence. Everything to-day is a scramble from one day to another, and most of us have little else to do but to live as best we can."

"That is only too true," added their hostess. "You can realize now, Prince, why I should have liked to live in another age. In other days there was more opportunity for cultural activities. To-day, all that is literally extinguished."

At this moment Lucien Feather offered his hostess a cigarette, and in so doing asked her a question.

"Do you think, my dear lady, that the degeneracy of Art and Culture is attributable to the age in which we live, or is it not caused by the people who live in it?"

It was generally agreed that this was not an easy question to answer. Sir Stanley Illingden expressed the opinion that nobody in his lifetime was in any way comparable to the great Masters. This was wholly attributable to the rush and hurry of business life.

"I agree with Miss Margaret Gerdison that nobody has any time these days. Look at the letters people write now-a-days. Only yesterday I came across some letters written by my grandfather nearly a hundred years ago. They were beautiful letters. They were all written to his brother and you have no idea how interesting they were. He was apparently staying in a country house party somewhere in the west country. He was staying, not for a week-end, but for three weeks. During this sojourn he wrote several long letters to his brother in London, giving

him a most interesting account of all the people he met, and the various places he went to see. They were all written in his own handwriting, and the description he gave of a visit to Bath, and the people he met at lunch there, was really marvellous. Who ever does that sort of thing to-day? I am sure I don't."

"You have raised another point," said Major Greenttrigger. "You are talking about people's capacity to write. Now, I must say I have no very high opinion of the modern writer. Most of the stuff that gets published to-day is either just journalism, or else it's books about politics and sex. Most of the novels that get into print, I think are incredibly dull. We have lost the art altogether."

"Then you think," remarked Lucien Feather, "that it is the people themselves who are to blame and not the circumstances in which they live?"

"I don't know," replied Major Greenttrigger. "I must admit there is nothing particularly romantic about the underground railway, or the slums of Manchester. I cannot imagine anyone being inspired to write novels or poetry by places such as that. But there are other parts of England. I still consider the English countryside the most beautiful place in the world. I still do not understand why we cannot produce something worth reading."

"I agree with you, Major Greenttrigger," put in Lady Illingden. "We have lost the art altogether, but the reason for that is obscure. There were slums two hundred years ago. In fact, things were worse than they are to-day in many respects. The people rarely washed, smallpox and other diseases were rampant, houses were insanitary; but, nevertheless, there were people who could write and who could draw in such a way that their creations will always live. It may be lack of time, or it may be lack of money, but there is something radically wrong about the artistic world to-day."

"I still think it is the absence of the right people to patronize and encourage us who try to be artists," answered Margaret Gerdison. "There was a time when England possessed a very large class of persons whose powers of judgment and discernment in matters pertaining to art and

literature was remarkably good. In plain language, the standards of taste were high, and the higher you went the higher the taste. To-day, taste is not very high anywhere, still less is it in those who have most of the money and can pick and choose."

"I think that is very severe criticism," interrupted Lucien Feather. "I don't know that my taste is in any-way worse than that of my grandfather, who, I understand, was a sort of squire-cum-farmer living down in Devonshire. He seems to have owned a lot of property, farmed his own farm, which certainly was not small, and spent most of his leisure time hunting. From all accounts he was a terrific drinker and very uncouth. I cannot imagine he had much taste."

"He evidently knew good food, good liquor, and I expect he lived in a good house. What about his garden, his orchards, and his horses? I would bet you anything they were all of the very best. Don't run away with the idea that your grandfather's taste was bad because his manners were rather rough, judged by our standards." It was Pangloss himself who said this.

"Then if it comes to that," replied Lucien Feather, "what do you say is 'good taste'?"

"Forgive my interrupting," said Major Greentripper, "but I don't think that is the question that Miss Gerdison has put it to us. If I am not mistaken, she says standards of good taste are constant and well-established, and that we have not got them. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Margaret Gerdison. "To-day all sorts of things pass for good, which in any other time would not be noticed."

"It seems to me," remarked the Prince, "as though you all think the cause of the trouble is traceable to a general lowering of standards in every direction."

"That is what I say," rejoined their hostess. "What chance is there to-day for anything that bears the marks of genuine literature or genuine art? Nobody would look at it, if only for the reason that they would not understand it. The public's notion of art to-day is confined to the cinema, jazz music, and books on crime and sex. One has only to ask oneself one question. If there were a public

execution to-morrow, would not thousands flock to see it ? ”

General laughter greeted this remark, and the Prince informed the company that, as a matter of fact, public executions had not been abolished in Patam Patam. There had been one a few years back, and it had taken place on the advice of his cabinet with a view of making an example of a notorious criminal. The Prince added that it had not been a great success, and this practice he did not intend to continue.

“ We are getting a long way from the point,” said Pangloss. “ I think, if I may say so, that what is wanted is for us all to return to first principles. I do not despair either of the reading, or the artistic public. Notwithstanding what Miss Gerdison says, there are plenty of people whose judgment can be relied on to approve of what is good and to ignore what is bad. What she is trying to say, Prince, is that Art and Letters flourish best in a community that has a healthy aristocratic class, that is at once rich and cultivated. It is true that the burden of taxation prevents any but the very rich from collecting art treasures, and it is true also that many who have money to-day are not noted for their standards of culture. Be that as it may, these are by no means the only causes of our disappointing achievement in the fields of Art and Learning. We have forgotten to study human nature as it really is, and we can no longer portray human beings as they actually exist. There is too much time spent on materialistic science ; too much craving for amusement, that is invariably dull ; too much attention paid to the making of money, rather than its intelligent spending. The masses would rather go to a football match than buy and read a good book—still less visit an Art Gallery. In France, the middle classes, and even the lower classes go to the opera in thousands. That is not so here.”

“ France is hardly a model to follow, I imagine,” interjected Lucien Feather.

“ France is largely under an eclipse,” replied Pangloss, “ and that is one of the causes of general intellectual degeneracy. There was a time when she led the world, and led it well, in the fields which we are now discussing. We looked to her for true learning, light and laughter, some-

times liberty itself. French ideas, French manners, French wit, French food and French fashions were universally recognized as the very best. Who would design women's fashions if there were no Paris. France is out of it for many years. It is a sad thing, and a world without France is hardly a world at all." Their host paused for a moment, as though in contemplation, and the Prince turned towards him and asked him most politely, "Do I understand you to say that France's departure from her place as a first class power has had these evil consequences on Art and Letters?"

"Definitely," answered Pangloss. "The Frenchman is not only brilliantly creative, but his keen critical faculties would ridicule much of the rubbish that appears now. In literary matters, the Frenchman not only knows the best, but will tolerate only the best. Do you think that books about men and women who have never lived, nor are ever likely to live, who do and say things that only a lunatic would do or say, would pass muster with the critical, albeit rather cynical, Frenchman? Do you think the ghastly daubs of half-dressed women, not even beautiful, squatting on what looks more like a London fog than a cloud, that surrealist men in cubic figures, animals upside down, or flowers that bear no resemblance to the lovely originals, would excite anything but mocking laughter from the realistic Frenchman? Believe me, Prince," continued Pangloss, "we, who pride ourselves on belonging to the Republic of Letters, the only republic to which a gentleman can belong, we, I say, without France are like a body without a head."

"It would appear to me," replied the Prince to this peroration in Pangloss's own style, "as though you are complaining of an absence of realism in the literary and artistic world of to-day."

"I am," asserted Pangloss, with a trace of dogma that ill became his wonted easy nature. "Life itself begins and ends with realities. A child is born, a person dies, two people get married, for reasons that must be interesting. That is reality and that is nature. In consequence, he who would portray life and love and men and women must do so as they really are, and not as he thinks they ought to be. Without realism there is no art, because it is outside the

ken of man." Pangloss finished and proceeded to hand round whisky and soda. This was much enjoyed by all the company, the Prince in particular. Having taken a sip he turned to his hostess and asked her what she thought about it all.

"Well," she replied, "I fear we live to-day very much under the rule of the crowd. It is a crowd that knows nothing of art or learning, and cares still less. What interests the public to-day are such things as a murder trial with revolting details, a film star's third marriage, or a wages dispute in a big trade union. One has only to add a gangster film in which as many people as possible are killed, and you have completed the circle of what the average person reads about and thinks about. It is a depressing picture, but there it is. As for the ceaseless political wrangling with which the newspapers are daily filled, I consider it, now, to be just ineffably dull. At least there was a time when political controversy was fought out by gentlemen to their finger tips, whose fiery speeches were models of classical style. They may have drunk deeply and gambled wildly all night long, but they made life romantic and supplied the artists of pen or pencil with something worth perpetuating. Just answer me this! Who wants to paint a trade union leader haranguing a crowd of noisy workmen in a dispute over their wages? Contrast that with Charles James Fox advocating the freedom of the Press, or Burke declaiming against the French Revolution. The very clothes they wear are a self-eloquent comparison between greatness and littleness. Now, you know why we have sunk. The tone set by our political leaders is simply boring."

"That is all very well," said Lucien Feather, "but you could not expect me, as a prospective parliamentary candidate to get up on a platform dressed in a wig, red breeches and silk stockings, and deliver classical orations."

"But you would look lovely, attired like that," suggested Margaret Gerdison. "I am sure you would get all the women's votes. Politics would become quite jolly."

"Forgive me if I point out to you," remarked Pangloss, "that I think that whatever you wear, and whether your

speeches are in the classical style or not, the principles involved may not have changed."

"What do the masses care for principles?" answered their hostess. "What interests the public to-day are the dividends of a gas company, the salaries of school teachers, who are probably all socialists, or the amount of offal off the ration for the next week-end. In other days, it would be a masterpiece of painting, a novel, or a lampoon on the Government brimful of polished wit. I can assure you, Prince, all that we like, all that we think is good, is crushed by the reign of the multitude. Individualism is dead—possibly never to return."

"You see, Prince, we come back to liberty, about which I was talking to you when we left the dining-room," said Pangloss, with a merry laugh, helping himself to a whisky and soda. It was at that moment that Sir Stanley and Lady Illingden rose from their seats and intimated that they thought it was time for them to leave. But host and hostess begged them to stay. Even the Prince added his protestations at their departure, regarded by all as premature.

"I must be in the City shortly after nine in the morning," said Sir Stanley. "I simply must. I have a board meeting at ten o'clock sharp."

"We hope to meet you again," added Lady Illingden.

"Most certainly," remarked Sir Stanley. "I would like you to see some of my pictures, and I know my wife would be delighted to show you her 'objets d'art' that she has been collecting for years."

"I should," replied that lady, and then addressing their hostess in the act of saying goodbye, positively insisted on the Prince being brought round to their house later by Pangloss and his wife. Both the Panglosses said they would be delighted to do so. The Prince said he looked forward to such a visit with great pleasure; and with many expressions of gratitude for a most enjoyable evening, Sir Stanley and Lady Illingden took their departure.

"You must have another drink," said Pangloss, almost at once.

"It really must be the last and then I, too, must be

going," replied the Prince.

Pangloss proceeded to dispense alcoholic refreshment to the Prince and Lucien Feather, Miss Margaret Gerdison asking to be excused. The Prince took the opportunity of thanking his host and hostess for a most delightful evening. All agreed the evening had been a happy and memorable one. "What will you do, when you get back home?" asked Miss Gerdison, jokingly. "Especially after all we have been saying to you."

"I must confess I shall be in rather a difficulty," said the Prince. "The extremely ambitious ideas that you all seem to have are quite beyond my people. Even the members of my small cabinet are not exactly artists, nor indeed do they possess pretensions to be such."

"That need not worry you much," replied the hostess; "your cabinet ministers are by no means alone in that respect."

"That may be so," answered the Prince, tactfully, "but at least your cabinet ministers possess the rudiments of education, which mine do not."

"Even that is a debatable point," ejaculated the hostess sadly.

"My dear lady, you cannot say that," interrupted Lucien Feather. "There are still some educated persons in the House of Commons."

This remark was greeted with much good-tempered laughter; at which moment Miss Margaret Gerdison announced that she, too, ought to be going. They all rose, and as that lady was taking steps to retire, Pangloss suggested that the Prince might like to go home in the same taxi-cab as Lucien Feather, as the latter was going his way. Both the Prince and Lucien Feather agreed on this at once; and they, too, made preparations to depart. As they reached the door, the Prince remarked to his host and Feather, that as far as he could see, what was colloquially referred to as education, evidently played a prominent part in the various topics which they had been discussing.

"That is so," replied Pangloss. "The basis of everything is education, that is a *sine qua non*."

"Oh, is that so?" said the Prince. "But a little while ago that banker fellow told me the gilt edged market

was the basis of everything. Moreover, some of the speeches of prominent politicians, that I have been reading in the newspapers, assert that the National Health Insurance Scheme, whatever it is, is the basis of everything. I should like to know what the real basis of your country's life is."

"A highly civilized country like ours, Prince," answered Pangloss, "has many bases, of which education is one of the most important. Probably it is the most important; and let me tell you, the standard is very high—yes, very high indeed. We consider that those who satisfy these standards can go anywhere, and do anything."

The Prince paused a moment at the top of the staircase and reminded his host that no arrangements had been made for the morrow.

"Might I not see something of this education?" asked the Prince quietly.

Pangloss experienced something of a shock and remained quite rigid.

"Excellent," said Feather; "take the Prince down to Claydon's. You know, Pangloss, one of our great public schools. It is not far from London. You can run him down in a car in the course of an hour or so."

"Nothing would suit me better," replied the Prince. "You agree, Pangloss, don't you?"

Pangloss appeared somewhat diffident at this suggestion, and made no reply. By that time they were at the bottom of the staircase, and much to Pangloss's surprise, the telephone bell rang.

"Excuse me," he muttered, and disappeared into the small library leaving his guests in the hall. On lifting the receiver he discovered that no less a person than Sir James Footle was at the other end of the line.

"I understand from my own private intelligence service," said that official, pompously, "that the Prince has been dining in your house, to-night."

Pangloss replied that such an event had, in fact, taken place.

"Why was I not informed?" roared Sir James Footle. "Moreover, I wish to know who was there, what happened, and what the Prince had to eat and drink. I

need this information for purposes of filing, if for nothing else."

Pangloss thereupon began a long explanation of what had occurred, coupled with profuse apologies for not having notified Sir James in advance. He assured him that everything had gone off splendidly, and that the Prince had expressed his great pleasure at the proffered hospitality. Knowing Footle, Pangloss gave him an account of the menu. By the time he had described the various courses, including the cutlets, fried in his wife's special cheesy batter; the magnificent *souffle* of bananas in raspberry jam, with cream; and the *chef d'oeuvre* of macaroni and mushroom, served as an *entree*; Sir James was almost in a temper.

"You had all that, and you did not ask me?" he said. "What did you drink?"

"Some remarkably good claret," answered Pangloss promptly.

Sir James Footle seemed to be virtually knocked out at this information, and Pangloss seized the chance of informing him that the Prince had intimated, in the most polite manner, his desire to visit, the very next day, one of the foremost educational establishments of our country, namely, Claydon's, the great public school.

"What!" exclaimed Sir James, evidently much astonished.

"Yes, that is so. What am I to do? The Prince seems intent on going."

There was quite a pause and Sir James was clearly thinking hard. After quite two minutes he finally said, "Show him the school chapel, the school library, and some boys playing cricket. That will be enough for him to see. I was myself at Claydon's, and we don't want him poking his nose too much into that place."

"Then I have your permission to take him down there?" asked Pangloss.

"Yes," was the reply, "provided you ring up the Headmaster first of all. I will myself telephone him in the morning, and with full warning from both of us he should be able to set the stage suitably."

On that, the conversation came to an end. Pangloss

was much relieved. It was clear to him that his immediate superior was so far not dissatisfied.

He found his guests on the point of departure when he re-entered the hall. His wife was there and was bidding them all goodbye. A taxi-cab was waiting for the Prince and Lucien Feather. Miss Margaret Gerdison, who lived quite close, was walking home. She did, in point of fact, depart first.

As the Prince and Feather entered the taxi-cab, Pangloss said, "I will be with you to-morrow, Prince, shortly after ten o'clock. You shall be introduced to-morrow, in part at any rate, to our system of education, which, I can assure you, is the best in the world."

With that heartening observation His Serene Highness sped away in a tax-cab, with his not unattractive companion. He also had the consoling reflection that on the morrow he would see in part, but only in part, the manner in which the young gentlemen of England were brought up, educated, and trained in all those various matters requisite for the management, administration and government of His Britannic Majesty's vast Empire.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCE VISITS CLAYDON'S

PANGLOSS ARRIVED rather later than usual at the Prince's hotel. None the less, the Prince was waiting for him. Pangloss had borrowed a friend's car, complete with chauffeur. He had thought this better than driving his own car, because he would have more opportunity to converse with the Prince and prepare him for what he was going to see. The two of them settled themselves in the back of the car, and they drove off.

"We have some distance to go," said Pangloss. "It will take us about an hour and a half. The journey out of London will take most of the time. Once out of London we shall not be long."

The Prince replied that he was much looking forward to the journey, no matter how long it took.

"I suppose we shall be in the country soon," he said.

"Yes," replied Pangloss. "Very beautiful country it will be, too," he added.

In the meanwhile, the car moved its way through the maze of the London streets. The Prince kept on questioning Pangloss about everything he saw, and Pangloss replied as best he could. Huge shops, innumerable churches of varying denominations, motor-buses by the hundred, trams, and horses of all kinds passed before the eyes of the Prince.

"London seems an enormous place," commented the Prince.

"It is," said Pangloss, "and what is more, it increases in size year by year. It will soon be quite unwieldy."

The immense number of churches and religious conventicles, all presumably professing Christianity in varying forms, struck the Prince as odd, and he remarked on the point to Pangloss.

"It means, I suppose," said the Prince, "that being

unable to agree amongst yourselves about this world, you cannot agree about the next."

"There is a large measure of truth in that, I fear," answered Pangloss, sadly. "The majority of our people are Christians, although I admit that on certain principles they differ among themselves fairly widely. Be that as it may, there is none the less a large body of opinion that is not even agreed on right and wrong, good and bad. You have met some of these people already. That queer young man at Arthur Litterdale's, and all those persons you saw demonstrating in Whitehall, belong to this set. They regard themselves as advanced thinkers."

"Is that so," said the Prince, adding, "and what do they say about it all?"

"They say far too much and think too little, in my opinion," replied Pangloss, and then continued, "For example, they start at the beginning of life and assert that to earn your own living is wrong. Now, it is manifest that a living can only be earned, or gained, by profits, and not by losses. That, according to all progressive thought, constitutes exploiting others, is parasitic, and morally wrong. Instead, they argue with great arrogance that everyone should live by working as little as possible. If this proves insufficient for a livelihood, it is then perfectly legitimate to live on the property of others, which I should have thought was parasitic. They regard as right what we call wrong, and wrong what we call right."

"If you cannot agree on the fundamentals of life," interrupted the Prince, "I imagine life will rapidly become impossible."

"It may come to that," replied Pangloss, "if these people are allowed to have it all their own way. Let that pass. It is the same with good and bad. Good taste, good manners, good conduct—these progressive personages—consider—are all bad. Instead of good taste, they cultivate what is ugly and sordid. Good manners they dismiss as bourgeois hypocrisy. This, I may tell you, furnishes a good and valid reason for insulting everyone not of their way of thinking, on every possible occasion. As for good conduct, they commit what we should call crimes every day of their lives. In short, a very large part of the

community wants the whole way of life turned upside down. The number of churches you see all advocating the same thing in different ways, does not help the situation. Those who believe that wrong is right and bad is good, observe that those who say what is right and what is good are not agreed amongst themselves on right and wrong, good and bad."

"There is a very short answer to that," said the Prince. "Put in front of these people a good egg and a bad egg. That will show them the difference fast enough."

"Unfortunately," said Pangloss, "there are very few eggs in this country to-day, and a fair number of those are bad, so that demonstration is not available."

"Well," said the Prince, "it is your country, not mine. My people have plenty of eggs. Perhaps that is why my people, whom you might consider uncivilized, know right from wrong, and good from bad, better than many who consider themselves highly civilized."

"Understand this, Prince," said Pangloss. "Civilization is right and is good, otherwise it is not civilization—and that is the end of the matter," he added firmly.

After quite an hour's threading through the overloaded streets of London, the houses began to thin out and green fields made their appearance. The Prince was delighted at this, and became exceeding talkative. Pangloss, however, seemed to become rather reserved, as though he had something on his mind. After they had been travelling for about half an hour in the country, the Prince turned to him and said, "You seem quiet this morning, Pangloss. I hope you are feeling well!"

"Oh, yes, yes," replied Pangloss. "I am quite well thank you." None the less, he remained somewhat subdued. The Prince, who always considered the feelings of others, sensed that Pangloss was not really over happy, and accordingly he refrained from much conversation, sank back into his seat and admired the pretty countryside. In this way they travelled on for some miles.

Now, as a matter of fact, Pangloss was distinctly apprehensive. It had never been intended that the educational establishments of our country should be shown to His Highness, save possibly a passing glance of Oxford

and Cambridge. On the night before, the suggestion that the Prince should visit a public school had been sprung on him by surprise and it was a somewhat unwelcome one. He had seen enough of the Prince by now to realize that His Highness's critical faculties were of no mean order. The Prince's powers of judgment and discernment were clearly considerable, and the prospect of taking him round a public school, albeit a famous one, was a project that he did not altogether relish. Pangloss was not unfamiliar with these places, having been to one himself. Moreover, his own son was at a well-known public school, so he also had experience of these establishments from the point of view of the parents, an aspect not always free from difficulty. They were now not far off the great place and his feelings were anything but easy. He had telephoned the Headmaster at breakfast time that morning, and discovered that Sir James Footle had already been communicating with that very important person. The Headmaster, accordingly, had been fully warned of the nature and exalted rank of the individual who was to descend upon his wonted academic serenity. Pangloss had only a slight acquaintance with this Headmaster, which did not improve the situation. His name was Winton d'Elgar and Pangloss had been gratified to learn that after Sir James Footle's earlier telephone message, Mr. d'Elgar had hastily set about preparing a reception appropriate for the Prince. Pangloss had been led to believe that, quite by chance, the Prince would discover a fairly distinguished gathering assembled at the Headmaster's house. A certain peer, who had a son at the school, would be dropping in to see how his son was recovering from measles. It was possible that his peeress would be there too if that lady could be induced to put off one or two engagements. The Headmaster had opined the view that she would almost certainly be there, as, of course, he would tell her that a reigning Prince was expected that morning. Pangloss also understood that a Bishop would be somewhere in the offing. Apparently, also, the Headmaster had tried to get a High Court Judge to grace the proceedings with his presence. He had even telephoned Mr. Justice Muddle, who was an old boy of the school, with a view to inducing that eminent personage to

drop in for a few minutes when the Prince's visit was taking place. That old man, however, was far too astute to get mixed up in this affair, and pleaded his judicial appointment at the Royal Courts of Injustice, although, in truth, he was playing golf.

Pangloss had learnt all this useful information by telephone, together with the news that one or two lesser lights might be encountered strolling in the grounds.

In spite of the Headmaster's undoubted adroitness as a stage manager, Pangloss still remained rather nervous. It was an expedition that he felt might well come to grief if the Prince showed signs of being inquisitive. Sight of the ferocious and sexless matron, a whiff of the unpalatable gastronomic horrors that habitually emerged from the kitchen, or contact with a socialist master, would be calamitous. Any exhibitions of mob law and virtual anarchy, not unknown at these places, would not be likely to raise the Prince's opinion of the establishment. Above all, Pangloss made up his mind that under no circumstances could the Prince be permitted to investigate the actual educational activities that went on. Nor did he want His Highness to be troubled with any of the futile ceremonies about nothing in particular that are a common event in public school life. The main features of these affairs are not unknown to be long and, frequently, boring speeches. As Pangloss now knew only too well, the Prince did not like speeches very much, whether long or short. In the meanwhile the car sped on and they had reached a small sort of country town on the outskirts of which the great academy for the education and upbringing of young gentlemen was situated.

"It has been a beautiful drive," said the Prince. "I have enjoyed it immensely. I have never seen such scenery."

"I am glad you liked it," answered Pangloss. "I think we are nearly there."

At that moment, the car swung out of the road, through some lodge gates and into a large and spacious drive.

"We have arrived," remarked Pangloss. "The school is over there," he added, pointing to a cluster of buildings partly hidden by some trees.

They proceeded up the drive at a slow and sedate pace, and some boys in white flannels could be seen playing at the nets on the cricket field, away to the right. Some beautiful trees and a few formal lawns were encountered. Boys, in twos and threes, were to be seen walking about, in school caps. The sun was shining brightly and the general picture was not unattractive.

"This is the Headmaster's house if I am not mistaken," said Pangloss, casually, as they approached a Victorian-looking building that appeared to be on the edge of, but adjoining the school itself.

The car stopped opposite the front door out of which came instantly a tall, not bad-looking man, in academic cap and gown. He was Mr. Winton d'Elgar. He welcomed the Prince and Pangloss with much effusiveness, and conducted them with considerable ceremony into the hall. Here was waiting the Headmaster's wife and she was presented to the Prince. She, also, evinced no little pleasure at receiving His Highness. She was a middle-aged woman, and had obviously dressed herself up for the occasion.

"Do come into the drawing-room," remarked the Headmaster. "It so happens that we have one or two of the boys' parents here this morning, and I am sure they would be delighted to meet you." So saying, he moved his two visitors into a large room at the side of the hall.

Inside this were half-a-dozen persons, all engaged in animated conversation, which ceased on the entry of the Prince. The Prince was promptly introduced to them all, and the whole party, now about a dozen in number, split up into two groups.

The Prince found himself talking to a certain peer, whose name he did not catch. The latter's wife was also much in evidence, and the Headmaster himself took good care to be one of this group.

"Damn good school, this," said the Peer. "I was here, myself, as a boy. d'Elgar was only a House-master then, weren't you, old boy?"

"I was, as a matter of fact," replied the gentleman so addressed.

"Damn good house it was, too," went on the Peer.

"Why ! we provided half the school cricket eleven. Do you remember that game we played against some scratch team from Oxford ? They brought down four or five blues, including a fast bowler. I hit him for six with the first ball, and then went on to make over fifty."

"You made fifty-five, if my memory serves me rightly," added Mr. d'Elgar, speaking rather precisely. "And a very good innings it was, too. Without you, we should have lost the game."

"Charles is mad on cricket, even now," put in the peer's wife. "He is always up at Lord's, and actually plays in our village eleven."

Much good-natured laughter greeted this remark, the peer laughing louder than the others.

"Of course, village cricket is nothing compared to the games we played here," the peer continued. "My God ! They were games here ! Every fellow was on his toes from the moment the first ball was bowled, and heaven help you if you dropped a catch. I tell you, in those days, cricket was cricket. Now-a-days, it seems only pat ball."

The Headmaster interrupted the peer at this stage, and politely reminded him that the school had already won several matches that year, and had nothing of which it need feel ashamed. Furthermore, pointed out the Headmaster, the peer's son would have been playing in the First eleven on the following Saturday were it not for his unfortunate attack of measles.

"Oh, how is George this morning ?" asked the peer, referring to his son.

"Very much better, I am glad to say," replied the Headmaster. "The matron is very pleased with his progress."

"That's good," said the Peer. "Damn good. The little devil is getting out of a lot of work, I imagine."

"Oh, well," answered the Headmaster, jokingly, "that cannot be helped. We will make it up, next term, I expect. He is, as a matter of fact, doing fairly well."

The peeress thereupon began a veritable interrogation of the Headmaster about her son's academic advancement or otherwise, in the school. She learnt that her son's Greek and Latin were only moderate, his history was

rather weak, and his spelling of English uncertain, and at times positively erratic.

"The most disappointing thing of all," added the Headmaster, "is his mathematics. He seems quite at sea with mathematics. In fact, I sometimes wonder whether he has any clear idea what it is all about. That is so unlike your husband. Your husband always topped the class at mathematics, when he was here, you know. He was particularly good at logarithms, weren't you?" emphasized the Headmaster to the Peer. The Peer was rescued from answering this question by the intervention of a short, well-groomed little man, whom the Prince had hitherto not noticed.

"I say, is it true you have got an Archbishop coming down for Speech Day this year?" said this little man to the Headmaster.

"Most likely," replied Mr. d'Elgar. "I am in correspondence with him now, and I expect to hear one way or the other any day. Only this morning I have had a letter from his secretary to say that His Grace is endeavouring to put off various engagements so as to be able to come to see us. It is true, the secretary did vaguely hint that the Archbishop was expected that day at a Diocesan Purity Conference. I apprehend that is one of the many appointments which he is endeavouring to put off."

"No doubt," said the little man, "to come here would be a much more pleasurable engagement, and of far greater importance. Which Archbishop is it, did you say, who is coming here?"

"The Archbishop—er—that is—a—an—that is, one of the Archbishops, is practically certain to be here, practically certain," replied the Headmaster firmly, making it perfectly clear he did not want the matter pursued any further.

The little man took the hint, and began an inquiry about his son's progress at school. "I understand," he remarked casually, "that Arthur is at the bottom of the class in French. Why is that?"

"Well," replied the Headmaster, "he is distinctly weak with irregular verbs. That spoils all his work."

"Oh," said the fond parent, "that is the trouble, is

it? I must say, I sympathize. I am rather vague about irregular verbs, myself, in English, let alone in French. What is an irregular verb, my dear," he said, turning to his wife, a smartly dressed girl, standing beside him.

The lady in question did not reply very quickly. With that chivalry of which only the learned world is capable, Mr. d'Elgar promptly said, "Your anxiety may be set at rest at once. I shall myself be taking the French class next term."

At this stage, the peeress informed her husband that it was time they were going. Mr. d'Elgar seemed appropriately distressed at this news, and threw out a hint that he would be pleased if they would take a walk round the school playing field and stay to lunch. The Peer evinced no great desire to stay to lunch, and, in fact, intimated that, having regard to his pressing engagements, far too much time had been spent already on this visit, necessitated by his son's illness. "I was really due at a board meeting, this morning," he said. "I don't know how they will get on without me. The affairs of the East Shoreditch Automatic, Self-working and High Pressure Drainage Company will get into a regular mess if I don't keep a sharp eye on them," he added, laughing.

"Of course, of course," acquiesced Mr. d'Elgar. "It is good of you to come, and we have been delighted to see you. Come in whenever you like, only give me a ring first, in case I should be more than usually busy."

"Naturally," came the reply. "I know well how busy you are. Looking after all these young fellows and keeping them all in order is a hard day's work, I am sure. Of course, as you know, these places were pretty tough in my day. My God, they were! You got your head bashed in almost every day. Now, I gather, it is all different; it's quite civilized, in fact."

"We do look after them pretty well now, I think," replied the Headmaster.

Pangloss, at this moment, skilfully guided the Prince in the direction of the drawing-room door, and into the hall. He thought it no bad idea for the Prince to observe the departure of the peer and his wife. In the hall there was much mutual handshaking, and the peer and the Prince

bade one another goodbye with no little cordiality, and both expressed the hope that they might meet again. Mr. d'Elgar was heard promising to keep a personal eye on the progress of their son's measles, much to the gratification of that young man's mother.

A stately Rolls-Royce, complete with liveried driver and footman, was observed, at that juncture, to be waiting at the front door. It was, largely, on that account that Pangloss wished the Prince to see the departure of these two distinguished persons. They entered their car with becoming dignity, Mr. d'Elgar all the while keeping up a running flow of conversation, principally about the weather. At long last they were comfortably ensconced in the back seat of their car. The Headmaster and Pangloss, their faces wreathed in smiles, were bidding their last farewells, with the Prince standing between them. For some obscure reason, the chauffeur missed his gear, and the car did not start at the expected moment. At that precise second, the peeress was heard to say to her husband, "What is a logarithm, Charles?" To which came the answer, "I haven't the faintest idea."

Mr. d'Elgar and Pangloss almost dragged the Prince back into the hall, and the car drove off.

By this time, the Prince was somewhat puzzled at all he had seen and heard, and gently suggested that he would like to see something of the school, or, at any rate, be given some inkling of what went on there.

"Certainly," replied Pangloss. "I expect the Headmaster will see us privately when the other guests have left."

As a matter of fact, the others were in the process of leaving. Mr. and Mrs. d'Elgar shook hands with them all, expressing the fervent hope that they would all be able to come to the forthcoming Speech Day, now but a fortnight off. Almost all announced their intention of being present on the school's great day, and on that happy note, they entered their respective cars and drove off.

The Headmaster seemed much relieved when the last of his guests had disappeared, and proceeded to invite the Prince and Pangloss to step into his private garden, at the back of the house. Mrs. d'Elgar disappeared, tactfully,

and the three of them walked through the hall in the direction of a small door. The hall was large and their peregrination occupied a few minutes, during which the Prince observed Pangloss and the Headmaster deep in earnest conversation. He did not hear what was said, but he did catch the word "religion," followed immediately by Pangloss's muttered, "Better not."

At that moment they reached the small door, passed through it, and arrived at a neat garden of no great size, the main feature of which was a formal lawn, on three sides of which were the school buildings.

In the centre of the lawn was a mulberry tree of considerable age, under whose hospitable branches were some deck chairs and a few seats. The Headmaster motioned his two guests towards the chairs, on which he invited them to be seated, and at the same time, he begged to be excused for a few minutes.

The Prince and Pangloss sat down on these comfortable chairs, and His Highness took the opportunity to survey a scene that unquestionably possessed not so much a beauty as a prim scholastic quietude of its own. The lawn, itself, was well-kept and conventional, like its owner. Nothing unwanted, nothing irregular, nothing to which exception could be taken, was to be seen in this quiet backwater of a busy, bustling, educational institution, peculiar to England.

By the side of the small door through which they had entered could be seen their host's private study. Clearly Mr. d'Elgar alternately used his study, and his garden, for his more intimate receptions. From what the Prince could see the study was like the garden. It was a trifle severe, singularly inartistic, but correct in every way. He caught a glimpse through the window, of shelves filled with books. Whether it was the flower beds in perfect array, the lawn, itself, but recently mown, every tree nicely pruned, or the curtains at the window, the Prince saw rectitude and propriety in every line and every corner.

On three sides of the lawn were the school buildings, attached to one of which was the Headmaster's private house. These buildings were anything but attractive. They appeared to consist of long corridors, on the top of

which were evidently dormitories. Every now and again the Prince observed a square shaped building that might be a class-room. In the distance could be seen the larger outlines of the school chapel, and a lesser building that Pangloss told him might be the school library. In all directions save one, the Prince saw buildings, and then more buildings, not one of them like another. The most that could be said was that the very variety of these architectural erections prevented the ensemble from resembling a barracks.

The Prince's eye, and also his ear travelled, in due course, towards the one side of the lawn on which there were no buildings, and on which a queer scene was being enacted. On this particular side of the lawn was the remainder of the drive, beyond which were some stately oak trees standing on the edge of a plantation. Sauntering in a most absent-minded way under these oak trees was the tall figure of a benevolent-looking man, attired in clerical dress. Moreover, this reverend personage displayed an additional sartorial attraction in that he wore those resplendent black gaiters appropriate only for the highest dignitaries of the Church. This magnificent ecclesiastical individual had his eyes on the ground and was clearly lost in thought. He strolled back and forth, as though waiting a call or a cue, which in fact was the case. Happily, or unhappily—and no one will ever know the truth—he received a call which he didn't expect, and missed a cue which he had been anticipating for some time.

"Wedgehorn," roared the Headmaster. "Wedgehorn! Mr. Smith Wedgehorn!" repeated Mr. d'Elgar, in tones as hurried as they were angry. "Mr. Wedgehorn, I want you at once."

Whereupon, there emerged from behind a bush, a comparatively young man, quietly dressed in a tweed coat and flannel trousers. He was obviously a junior master.

"Wedgehorn," said the Headmaster, in an authoritative voice, "Take the Bishop into the town at once and give him lunch. I will pay. The Prince is a Hindu, a Parsee, a Mohammedan, or something else. I don't quite know what he is, but if they meet, there may be difficulties."

Whereupon, the august prelate was unceremoniously bundled into a small car by Mr. Wedgehorn and Mr. d'Elgar with a view of being regaled with lunch in the local town. The Bishop was a large man, but the two masters hauled him into the car with marked alacrity, and the car disappeared down the drive at considerable speed.

Notwithstanding certain very loud attempts at conversation by Pangloss, the Prince saw and heard all this, and he could not help reflecting that junior masters are like junior subalterns. They frequently have to earn their living by doing all the odd jobs.

The Bishop being out of the way, the Headmaster returned to his guests and took a seat between them.

"This is your first visit to our country, I believe," remarked Mr. d'Elgar.

"That is so," replied the Prince.

"I hope you are enjoying it, and may I add that I account it a great pleasure and a great honour to receive you here. It is kind of you to find time to visit us," said the Headmaster.

"I am always interested in educational matters," answered the Prince. "The education of my people at home is practically non-existent, judged by your elaborate standards."

"Is that so?" rejoined the host, apparently much surprised. "Of course, education in this country, on our plane, is very good indeed. There is nothing in the world comparable to the standard set by us for boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. That standard is high, and it is something of which we are legitimately proud."

"I'm afraid I know nothing at all of these matters," said the Prince. "In fact, I am completely ignorant of the principles on which a great public school like this is run."

There was a slight pause. The Headmaster looked at Pangloss and Pangloss looked at the Headmaster. Not only the eyes, but the minds of the two men met, and the Headmaster turned towards the Prince, and speaking with careful deliberation, addressed His Highness as follows:

"You should appreciate that a school of this kind is based on certain great traditions. That is the first point which should be borne in mind. We were founded literally

many generations ago, when the world was very different from what it is now. None the less, these great traditions we preserve, and not even I would dare to depart from them. It may interest you to know that my immediate predecessor was asked to resign by the Governing Body because he broke with one of our most cherished traditions. He chose to alter the time of the morning roll call. That would never do. Our school bell, itself very ancient, has rung for hundreds of years at one particular time and it must continue to do so. The solemn, not to say—stately—routine of this great school, sanctified by many generations of masters and boys, is so traditional now that it is something with which no interference, or even variation in its slightest form, can never be tolerated. Practically nothing has been altered since our foundation, and what is more, nothing will be altered while I am here. Then again, on a certain Saint's Day in the Spring Term, a special sermon is preached in the school chapel. That being a religious topic I will not trouble you with the details of that."

The Headmaster stopped for a minute in his oration, ostensibly to clear his throat, actually in the hopes that his sense of tact might not be lost on one or both of his hearers. Pangloss appreciated the point at once, and his face beamed all over. The Prince waited for Mr. d'Elgar to continue in a state of ever-increasing curiosity.

"We have another tradition. On the last Sunday of the Winter Term the Head Boy recites an ode from Horace before the whole school. This interesting little ceremony is to commemorate the chance visit of a reigning monarch. It originated when a certain King of England passed through the school grounds in his carriage, one December morning, and gave a boy a book of Horace's Poems. I should emphasize that it has never been suggested that the monarch in question was incapable of reading Horace, and threw the book to the first person he saw; the version of the incident, current here, is that he stopped in his passage, asked a group of boys to read aloud his favourite ode, and gave the book to the one who, in his opinion, best rendered the beautiful original. The boy, himself, subsequently became a famous general, and presented the book to the school library, where it still is. You may think these

matters are trifling," continued the Headmaster smiling, "but I assure you they are not. They inculcate into the boys a sense of pride in the school, which we regard as being of paramount importance."

The Headmaster paused a moment, and the Prince lit a cigarette. Pangloss also lit a cigarette. Mr. d'Elgar, however, did not smoke.

"It is, I suppose, a great advantage to have been here at some time or other," remarked the Prince.

"Most definitely," replied Mr. d'Elgar. "Those who have been here can go anywhere and do anything. That speaks for itself. The long list of men, great in many walks of life, who have been here, is itself an eloquent testimonial. You appreciate that the mere fact of being here at all is an education."

The Prince was about to ask a question at this juncture, when his attention was diverted by the opening of a door behind him. Instinctively he turned his head in that direction, and he saw two masters emerge from a doorway at the side of one of the long corridors. The two masters were both in cap and gown, and so deeply engaged in their conversation as to be unaware of the presence of anyone else. One master was very tall, and quite young. The other was much older, quite short, and rather stout.

"Positively ridiculous, positively ridiculous to promote him to the sixth form after the paper he has sent in," said the older master to the younger one. The younger man seemed disposed to agree with his more senior colleague, who went on, "He got the wives of Henry VIII in the wrong order, thought Chaucer was the name of an American cocktail, and had some vague idea that John of Gaunt was a place up in Scotland. To cap all, he spelt successful with three 'c's' and one 's.' I call it hopeless to try to teach history when that is the sort of result we get. What is it all for? What are we here for, if it comes to that?" said the elder master, very earnestly.

"I admit it places us in a difficult position," replied the younger man. "We cannot promote him over the head of Templeton Holland, whose essay on 'The Life of a Beggar in the Elizabethan Age' was of such outstanding merit."

"I know that perfectly well," replied the elder man.

"He contrasted excellently the many differences experienced by beggars in those days, wandering from monastery to monastery to beg for food, with the unemployed in our own day, merely lining up outside the Labour Exchange, where they may get something, but not work. Furthermore, he did not fail to notice that in those days it was religious propaganda pumped into these unfortunates, whereas to-day the unemployed are perpetually entertained with political propaganda, so-called. As for all the crime, brutal violence and general lawlessness to be encountered in both ages, on the streets and in the country lanes, he rightly pointed out that there are really no differences at all. He drew an admirable picture of these important features of our civilization, I admit. The difficulty, however, does not stop there. I wish it did. There is Clifford Rockliffe's answer concerning Charles II and the Plague of London. He attributes this latter event to defective sanitation, which he says was the responsibility of the Government. It may, or may not, have been the responsibility of the Government. Inasmuch as the government of the day, for all practical purposes, was the personal government of Charles II, of whom I am a great admirer, such an answer goes down very badly with me."

"You cannot plough him simply because of your personal admiration of Charles II," replied the younger man. "To begin with, it is notorious that Charles II received bribes from Louis XIV. Moreover, although I am the mathematical master, and really know nothing of history, I gather the money was brought across the Channel by one of those lady friends of Charles II's, of whom we rarely, if ever, make mention in the presence of the boys."

"All that is mere political propaganda," answered the other master. "It was to England's interest to keep out of the war then raging. That, Charles II achieved brilliantly. Clifford Rockliffe did not so much as mention that. I repeat, I still do not know who to promote here."

It was at this moment that the Headmaster thought it was time for him to intervene. He waved his hand, with no little petulance, in the direction of the two masters, neither of whom observed the signal. The Headmaster then coughed loudly and signalled again, this time with

effect. The two masters disappeared rapidly through the door from which they had originally emerged, and the Headmaster turned to the Prince and resumed his observations.

"I was saying," continued Mr. d'Elgar in quiet tones, "how fortunate it is for a boy to be here. Association with others, many of whom become great, or are descended from the great, is itself a source of pride and satisfaction. Few fail to look back upon their time here with anything but pleasure, and in later life, to wear the old Claydonian tie will take you anywhere."

He paused a moment in his remarks, and Pangloss added his view that it was generally regarded as quite an honour to have been a member of this far-famed establishment. The Prince courteously invited the Headmaster to tell him a little more of what actually occurred in the school. In the politest possible manner he conveyed to Mr. d'Elgar that, so far, he had not been vouchsafed much information as to the educational activities of Claydon's.

"Well," said the Headmaster, "one of our great principles is that, as far as possible, the boys should do everything themselves. We find that develops them in more ways than one. It makes them self-reliant and self-confident. The boys practically do everything themselves, from the collars they wear, to the order in which they go into chapel. I should mention that questions of seniority are all important in a place like this. It is character which we aim to build up. That is our main objective. Consider for a moment the boys we have here, now. They are a fine lot of fellows, I can assure you." The Headmaster paused and looked fixedly at the Prince.

The Prince could not help expressing the opinion that under the wise guidance, and able, not to say, inspiring, imaginative, efficient, clever, talented, high-minded, and positively brilliant direction of Mr. d'Elgar, there could be no possible doubt that the boys must be, in every sense of the term, a fine lot of fellows.

The Headmaster was clearly much gratified at this compliment, and was about to continue when three imposing-looking figures were observed walking in their direction across the drive. The three figures in question

were the figures of three masters, in cap and gown, and they, too, were much absorbed in their conversation. The one in the middle was a tall, ascetic looking man, much older than the others, and he appeared to be addressing his two colleagues in a most dogmatic fashion. The two younger men were obviously listening to him with marked deference. Mr. d'Elgar was in some doubt as to whether or not to invite his guests to stroll with him to the playing fields, but events moved too fast for him.

"I shall refuse to take him into my class, no matter what you say," said the tall man to one of the younger ones. "His standard is definitely not up to that of my form. He ends all his sentences with a preposition, and in French prose he invariably puts the accents in the wrong place. That maddens me more than downright spelling mistakes. Look ! he is at the nets now," the master added, waving dramatically in the direction of the cricket ground. All three of them turned their eyes towards some white flannelled figures performing at a few nets, but a couple of hundred yards away.

"Is that Mornington Crabletree ? I don't think it is," remarked one of the younger masters, straining his eyes in the direction indicated.

"It is, definitely," replied the older man. "I am certain it is. He never does any work, so far as I can see."

The younger man still maintained, with perfect courtesy, that it was a matter of doubt as to whether or not one of the figures in the distance was that of the young gentleman in question. Whereupon all three of the masters became involved in a somewhat heated argument.

"When Crabletree bowls he invariably jerks his right leg," pointed out the younger man. "That boy is jerking his left leg, I think."

"I don't care which leg he jerks," angrily replied the older master. "It's him, alright, and he has no business to be there at this time in the morning."

The two younger masters continued to look at the boys playing cricket ; then, one of them triumphantly stated, "It cannot be him. That boy is bowling left-handed."

This startled the older master considerably and he condescended to look in the direction of the nets. All

three of them peered with great intentness. A fair amount of time was occupied with this survey, but unanimity was not attained. The two younger masters were not entirely convinced that young Mornington Crabletree was playing at the nets. The older master entertained no doubt about it, and added, with much emphasis, that in his opinion the boy was no acquisition to the school at all.

"Another of his faults is that he has no idea of punctuation. His essays are deplorable compositions. All his sentences are rolled into one and I defy anyone to know the beginning from the end," remarked the older master, conclusively.

"He plays a good game of cricket, you must admit," interposed one of the younger men. "Only yesterday he took four wickets in the last over of an inter-house match. That just won the game."

"Nonsense," replied the older master. "I was watching the game myself, and a pretty poor game it was, too. As for the four wickets he took, why, even I, at my age, could have taken them. The first two batsmen couldn't play at all, the third was a very dubious l.b.w., and the fourth was Smithkinson's wicket and he was busy telling one of his notoriously vulgar stories to the wicket-keeper. I don't know what we're coming to. Thirty years ago that sort of thing would not have been tolerated." He finished his criticisms of Mr. Mornington Crabletree with an air of positive despair. "We couldn't beat Borstal at tiddlywinks," he added.

"I think you are rather hard on him," pointed out one of the younger men, who had not hitherto contributed much to the discussion. "I must say, I rather like him. For one thing, he sings beautifully in the choir."

"You only think that," replied the older master, "because from where you sit in the chapel you can hardly hear him. I hear too much of him from my seat. I can assure you he positively bawls out the Psalms, not merely out of tune, but out of time, also. He is frequently ending a verse before I have begun it. Now you understand why I am not so frequently seen in chapel these days."

This last observation provoked the other two masters to look at one another rather keenly. One of them seemed

about to reply when a lot of noise was heard from one of the square-shaped buildings that joined on to the long corridors.

Not only the three masters, but the Prince, Pangloss, and the Headmaster heard sounds of desks being banged, tables pushed about, and chairs falling over. It was clear that a class of some kind was breaking up. The noise increased in volume and became such a commotion that the three masters deftly drifted away in the direction of the oak trees. The Prince heard sounds of things being thrown about and an inkpot came hurtling through a window to miss the three masters by a matter of inches. Over and above the turmoil, the Prince heard a considerable amount of shouting and laughing together with some language that was anything but parliamentary. Innumerable expletives of the coarsest kind, a stream of vulgar expressions, many oaths and curses and an infinite variety of adjectives quite unknown to the Prince, came over the air as some boys filed out of a class-room, in all stages of dirtiness and untidiness, and incidentally, rowdiness.

A huge, hulking, great boy was heard to yell at quite a small boy that he was going to bash his face in at the first opportunity. The small boy, who was very small indeed, was seen to flee in terror. Books were thrown about ; boys roughly pushed and shoved one another out of the way ; a catapult appeared as if by magic with its dangerous missiles flying in all directions ; and, not least of all, some toffee of a most indigestible character, encased in filthy paper, was passed from hand to hand.

Through this sea of anarchy appeared the portly, semi-dignified figure of the form master, whose sole desire quite clearly, was to get away from what was nothing but a howling mob. He took no steps of any kind to restore order. He passed serenely through the seething mass of semi-raving humanity.

The Prince saw all this and was much astonished. The Headmaster not only saw it, but realized that the Prince could not help observing a scene that possessed anything by a cultural orientation. With an autocratic wave of his arm, plus a stentorian command to a boy who seemed bigger and older than the others, Mr. d'Elgar endeavoured to bring to an end, what in other walks of life

might well be regarded as a riot.

This bigger boy started belabouring all and sundry with everything on which he could put his hands, and the disturbance quited down with the boys disappearing rapidly through various doors and windows, like so many rabbits bolting to their holes.

The turmoil having subsided, the Headmaster, with perfect *sang froid*, resumed his brief dissertation on the great school's activities.

"In the formation of character, discipline plays a prominent part, as I dare say you know. That does not mean it is oppressive. On the contrary, we flatter ourselves that we achieve a nice balance between firmness and liberty, of which a substantial measure is permitted. Of course, the excellent state of discipline that we preserve here is almost entirely due to the extremely extensive powers enjoyed by me, personally. In practice, nobody ever challenges my decisions. Only the Governing Body would do that and they meet but twice a year. This is a great advantage and largely accounts for the orderly routine of the school which runs very smoothly."

"It seems to me," remarked the Prince, "as though you possess altogether greater authority than even I do over my subjects."

"You may think so," replied the Headmaster. "It is true I can do very much as I like. Usually we say that, as Headmaster, I have a very wide discretion. An illustration of this occurred only last year. I was obliged, much against my will, to expel a boy. You realize, of course, that to be expelled from here is to be damned for life. I cannot say that I found the boy in question very likeable. That has little to do with the matter. What happened was this. The wife of one of our house-masters was expecting a baby. This information got round the school as things of that type do. Whereupon, this particular boy ran a sweepstake, or some such vulgar thing, on whether the expected infant was a boy or a girl. I could not tolerate behaviour of that kind."

"What was wrong in that?" interrupted the Prince, who did not quite follow the point of all this.

"My dear sir," emphasized the Headmaster. "For

an event of that kind to be made a matter of sport, chance, or wager simply is not done. That is conclusive. The honour of the school, and the honour of the house was gravely jeopardized by being brought into ridicule. That is an unpardonable sin, here. The boy had to go at once ; the moment I discovered what was going on. The distinguished members of the Governing Body were informed about it six months later, and supported me without question, as they always do. But you need have no anxiety. Our methods are hallowed by tradition and fortified by immense experience. We rarely, if ever, encounter difficulties and with our prestige they are easily surmounted."

With this observation, Mr. d'Elgar allowed himself a complacent smile and turned to Pangloss.

"Is His Highness married?" he asked Pangloss, in delicate tones.

"No," answered Pangloss.

"I was just wondering," remarked the Headmaster, "whether the Prince had a son whom he thought of educating in England. If such were the case, we should be delighted to welcome him here."

There was a considerable pause in the conversation, during which the Prince took the opportunity of explaining that matrimony had not yet come his way. He added that his heir, at the moment, was a small nephew who was far too young for a public school yet awhile.

Mr. d'Elgar gently riposted that it might be advisable to do, what is known as, put the boy's name down, so that he might enter the school later, without difficulty. The Prince did not jump at the suggestion. Instead, he made further polite inquiries as to the standard obtained by those so fortunate as to be educated at Claydon's, intimating at the same time that whoever succeeded him on the throne of Patam Patam would be called upon to shoulder responsibilities, heavy indeed. The hint was not lost on the Headmaster. Indeed, the great pillar of the academical hierarchy of our country appeared to regard this last remark as a personal challenge, which he accepted instantly.

"You don't suggest, do you," said Mr. d'Elgar, in tones more than usually clear, "that we should be

unable to educate your nephew and heir in a manner agreeable to the responsibilities that he will ultimately assume? Believe me, we can, and we do, take anyone here, and may I add they are treated alike. That is axiomatic. Be that as it may, we should account it a great pleasure to receive your nephew in, probably, ten years time, and can promise you the best education for him in the world."

"What happens after they leave here," asked the Prince.

"Most of them proceed to a university, and as a matter of fact," continued the Headmaster, "the standard at which we aim is one which will enable them to pass the Entrance Examination to those places. That standard is not, perhaps, excessively high. A boy of average intelligence should be able to attain it with comparative ease. Scholarship standard is rather high for some of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, we admit. A few boys, I am glad to say, win scholarships every now and again, and that causes us great pleasure because it is so good for the school."

The Prince seemed about to ask some more questions when the attention of them all was diverted by the arrival in the drive of a most imposing looking car, with an American number plate. It was a vehicle magnificent and splendid in the extreme. It was even larger and more sumptuous than the one that had but recently carried away the peer and his wife.

The car stopped in front of the lawn, and out stepped a large woman, extravagantly attired in what she, doubtless, considered was the height of fashion. An enormous hat fluttered in the breeze, a huge bag dangled from her hand, a beautiful dress appeared to be much in the way as she alighted. Seated in the back of the car was the figure of a man, who seemed undecided whether to remain in the car or to endeavour to get out. He looked what he was, namely, the mere male appendage of a husband to the massive woman who now descended on the Headmaster of the great school.

"Hi, you!" she roared, "Are you the Head?"

"I am the Headmaster," replied Mr. d'Elgar, with perfect dignity.

"Then you are just the fellow we want to see. My

Harry and me want to have a look round to see if your 'set up' is O.K. for our young 'un to learn the English way of life."

The Headmaster nearly exploded. Pangloss almost leapt from his chair and began to guide the Prince away. He had visions of taking the Prince into the school itself, if necessary. The Prince, who had seen enough for one morning, was by no means disinclined to be going, and moved in the direction of the hall through which they had come.

"I think it is time we left," said Pangloss.

"I agree," replied the Prince.

By that time, the woman was in full blast. As they passed through the small door, to Pangloss's horror, they heard her shout, "I guess you had better hurry up about it, Head, because if I am not outside of a cocktail in half-an-hour from now, I'm not Gertie P. Gussie, of Minneapolis, U.S.A."

Pangloss positively drove the Prince through the hall to their waiting car.

"What about some lunch in the town?" remarked Pangloss.

"That is an excellent idea," replied the Prince. "We need it, both of us."

As they entered the car Pangloss thought it wise to point out to the Prince that he need form no hasty judgment on the famous establishment.

"You have not seen half of what goes on at a public school," added Pangloss, seriously.

"That I can quite imagine," said the Prince, "but I have seen quite enough."

The car began to move off and they drove through the school grounds. Pangloss's worst fears had been realized. He remembered Sir James Footle's advice to show the Prince the school chapel, the school library, and the playing fields, and no more. He wished that could have been stage-managed. He was at a loss how to explain away the events of the morning. Having regard to the Prince's highly intelligent and extremely straightforward outlook on life, he thought it better to make a clean breast of it.

"You know, Prince," he said, "education, I admit is not one of our strong points. The most that can be said of

it is, that provided you don't take it seriously, it is good fun while it lasts."

"I dare say it is not bad fun, for a while," replied the Prince, "that is, for those who come out of it alive and unharmed. From what I have seen this morning, I doubt if it is always safe."

"You must understand, of course," Pangloss endeavoured to explain, "that it is generally recognized that, in England, education, to be effective, must be uncomfortable. That accounts for all the banging about and general upheaval you saw when that class broke up. We consider that it is good for the boys because it toughens them and hardens them. That is all part of the discipline of the school to which the Headmaster rightly attaches so much importance."

"Discipline, did you say?" answered the Prince, sharply, "What rubbish! Absolute anarchy reigns from one end of the place to the other."

They had now reached the school gates and as they emerged onto the main road the Prince turned to Pangloss, and pointing to the school buildings, said to him, "These fellows here, can they read and write?"

"Not very well," answered Pangloss.

"It is no wonder they need a university education when this business is over," replied the Prince. "I suppose they learn something up at Oxford and Cambridge?"

"They have to," answered Pangloss.

"For the very practical reason," commented the Prince, "that if they don't they would go into the world knowing virtually nothing. There is one thing I noticed," continued His Highness, "I didn't observe much of this private enterprise on which you set so much store in England. I should not think anything like that is permitted in a place of this sort. For the rest, it struck me as an odd mixture between a concentration camp and a Mutual Admiration Society. Each fellow pats the other on the back; they all tell one another what fine fellows they are. Interspersed with this are scenes of perpetual disorder, more reminiscent of my illiterate subjects in the East than what one would expect to encounter in a civilized

community. Where education comes in, I fail to see. Those boys who are clever doubtless educate themselves, and get scholarships to Oxford or Cambridge. That advertises the school and keeps it going after a fashion. The remainder survive as best they can. The sole benefit that accrues is when you have left the place. You can then wear the old school tie. Tell me, Pangloss, what happens at the smart girls' schools? Do they wear the old school undies on important occasions in later life?"

"It depends on what you mean by important occasions," said Pangloss.

"Well," said the Prince, "if a lady were joining an exclusive club, playing tennis in public, giving evidence in the Law Courts, applying to a bloated capitalist for a job, or interviewing a Socialist Cabinet Minister with the object of becoming no more than his secretary; I imagine on all such occasions, the old school undies would be just as valuable as the old school tie."

"I should say," said Pangloss, "that the ladies from the really smart schools might well dispense with those garments on those occasions."

"Why do you say that?" retorted the Prince.

"For the reason I have tried to convey to you. Those of us out of the top drawer in England, never say anything about our education, knowing we have never had any."

"Then how do the upper classes get on with the business of life at all, if they start with such a handicap?" asked the Prince.

"I will tell you," replied Pangloss. "They employ accountants, solicitors, business men who have risen from nothing without any education, sometimes members of the Bar, like myself; in short, a vast army of agents who have had to learn something, at one time or another, in order to earn a living. They tell them what to do, how to write their letters, and frequently, what to say; and that enables the upper classes to scramble through life."

"I thought you told me at the beginning of our association, that everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds here in England," remarked the Prince. "If I may say so, life in your country seems rather a desperate undertaking. There is one thing I cannot

understand. If this is the way the so-called educated classes are intellectually equipped for life, what happens to the lower classes? They get it all for nothing, whereas the fellows here have to pay for it ; if this is what you get when you pay, heaven only knows what you get when you don't pay. I should imagine they come out of the State controlled schools in a pretty hopeless condition."

"They pick up their education from the 'gutter' Press, the cinemas, the Trade Unions and political agitators," answered Pangloss. "That keeps them in their place, a fact of which they are wholly unaware. It is time for lunch now," concluded the Prince's host, firmly closing the conversation.

The car stopped opposite the town's one and only hotel, and the Prince was bidden to alight from the car, and partake of luncheon.

As they entered the hotel, the Bishop and Mr. Smith Wedgehorn came out. With no little difficulty and a certain amount of actual pushing of the Prince, Pangloss prevented a meeting. Eventually, they sat down at a table and prepared to eat a hearty meal.

The Prince much enjoyed his lunch and was distinctly refreshed when it was over. Pangloss remained somewhat reserved. He was not entirely clear in his own mind, as to where the next move should be. Obviously, he thought, he had better entertain the Prince, on their next expedition, with something that was entirely non-controversial. This was not so easy and as they travelled back to London in their car, Pangloss thought hard and long.

Suddenly, he had a brain wave. Just as the outskirts of the great capital were reached he turned to his guest and said, "Prince, to-morrow I will take you to the country."

"That would be delightful," replied the Prince.

"There, I can assure you," continued Pangloss, "that you will experience something the glorious beauty and infinite variety of which is unquestionable and unquestioned. I will send a telegram to my uncle when we get back to your hotel. My uncle lives in a tiny, unspoilt village about seventy miles out of London. He is the local land-owner, and incidentally, I am his heir. I hope one day, when he is no longer with us, to inherit his small estate.

It is really quite a small estate, but I spent all my youth there, and it is intended that we should end our days there after he has gone. It is one of the most beautiful villages in England, surrounded by the most gorgeous countryside, now bathed in that early June sunshine, when you will see it at its very best. We can travel down by train in the morning. It will not take more than a couple of hours, and we can have some lunch at my uncle's house. He is always pleased to see me, and I know he will be delighted to see you."

The Prince displayed the utmost pleasure at the prospect of spending the day in the country, under such happy, and, evidently, hospitable conditions. He even suggested they should depart by an early train so as to be there as quickly as possible.

"Certainly," agreed Pangloss, "if we leave shortly after nine we shall be in the village at about eleven, and we shall have plenty of time to look up some of my old friends there, before lunch. Let me tell you, Prince, that when you see the countryside of England in the summer, you will see a canvas of sheer beauty, so supremely perfect that no painter can ever portray it, be his pencil however delicate. You will see fields more green and refreshing, flowers more variegated and more lovely, fruit in greater abundance and better flavour, trees more stately, and woods more magnificent, than anywhere else in the world. Pervading all is an atmosphere of serenity and peace that is quite unique and beyond description. So far as Nature herself is concerned, you will see a heaven upon earth."

The Prince said that from what he had seen already of the country he was sure the proposed visit would be most enjoyable.

By that time, they had reached the West End of London. It was past tea-time, and as they were both somewhat exhausted by the events of the day, Pangloss suggested the Prince might like to visit his club.

The Prince acquiesced willingly, especially as his kindly host threw out the hint that if it was past tea-time, it was perilously close to cocktail time.

As a matter of fact, Pangloss belonged to more than one club. He tossed up in his mind which of two particular

clubs should have the honour of the Prince's visit. He decided that one club, slightly more lively than certain others, should be the one into which he would take the Prince. The driver was accordingly instructed to stop opposite a large comfortable looking building, in the heart of London's clubland. The two of them entered the club, and deposited their hats and coats on some pegs in the hall. The porter, a magnificent looking personage, smiled politely at Pangloss, and Pangloss smiled back.

The Prince observed that the building was commodious in the extreme. Many portraits hung on the walls. Pangloss explained they were portraits of past members of the club, who had been distinguished in various walks of public life. The Prince was invited to take a glance at one of the smoking-rooms, before proceeding downstairs to the bar. Pangloss pushed open a swing door, and the Prince saw a large room, filled with comfortable armchairs and sofas, with a few writing tables at the side. Bookshelves, filled with books, lined the walls. Newspapers and periodicals were scattered about everywhere. The smoking-room was by no means crowded with members. As a matter of fact, no more than about a dozen persons were there. These dozen or so individuals, both old and young, were to be seen, for the most part, fast asleep in the armchairs, whose obvious comfort the Prince could not fail to notice. One somewhat elderly man was snoring loudly, with a copy of "The Times" sprawled across his legs in such a position that it was quite unavailable for anyone else. Other specimens of humanity were to be observed in varying stages of somnolence, in all parts of the room.

"Very comfortable club, this," said Pangloss. "I use it a good deal. One can get away from everyone and everything, here."

"Evidently," replied the Prince. "It is a peaceful scene, I must say." The Prince added that he would not be above going to sleep, himself, in one of the armchairs, for a while; but Pangloss reminded him that the bar was open. Accordingly, they descended to that part of the club where liquid refreshment was to be obtained by those desiring it.

"You will see a very different scene, here," Pangloss

informed the Prince. "I must warn you, they drink rather heavily in this club."

The Prince replied that he was quite equal to that situation.

On entering the bar, the Prince saw in front of him a long, low-ceilinged room, filled with tables and chairs, and down one side of which was a large counter, behind which were two club servants dispensing drinks of all kinds. In contradistinction to the smoking-room, this room was filled to repletion. From one end to the other old and young men were standing in various postures, or sitting at one of the tables, occupied in drinking, smoking and chatting. The scene was quite gay, and laughter was heard from all directions and many throats. Almost at once, Pangloss was hailed by somebody who obviously knew him well, and he and his guest were prevailed upon to join a group of members, gathered round a table, on which were various drinks.

Pangloss ordered two whiskies and sodas, and then introduced the Prince to his friend, who, in turn, introduced the Prince to one or two others. They were all delighted to meet the Prince and began to ply him with questions as to where he had been and what he had seen. While sipping his whisky and soda, which he much enjoyed, he recounted some of his adventures to the assembled company. They were all most interested and complimented His Highness on the thoroughness of his sight-seeing.

More drinks were circulated, and the Prince casually mentioned that he had only just returned from Claydon's, the well-known public school. The drive there and back had been delightful, and he added, that in some ways he would have liked to have seen more of the place. He had no sooner mentioned the great name than a fat man roared out, "Claydon's! My dear Prince, whatever induced you to go down there? It is an absolutely rotten school compared to the one where I was." The fat man got no further. An elderly man on the other side of the table instantly retorted, "That remark, sir, is strongly resented. I was myself at Claydon's forty years ago, and let me tell you, we knocked hell into your school, Eton—or whatever it was—at Rugger, one day. I remember the game well.

I scored four sixes, myself. I imagine our fellows are as good now as ever they were."

"On the contrary," replied the fat man, gulping down a large whisky and soda. "You never beat us once—not while I was there, at any rate. In those days we won practically everything. Of course, I don't know what goes on now-a-days, but in my days we beat everyone almost at everything. The younger generation now are pretty hopeless."

Whereupon, to the Prince's surprise, a most animated discussion began, kept going by a plentiful supply of drinks, which seemed to be unending.

"The young fellows of the modern generation are no good at all," shouted an enormously tall man, as he emptied a glass of sherry. "In my young days, we were men then. I remember taking on Winchester, in the nineties' at Soccer. I did the hat-trick myself in the last over, to win the game by a matter of minutes. I tell you, sport was sport in those days. Don't you agree, George?" he added, to a rather corpulent person next to him, who could hardly stand up.

"Of course, of course," replied the man so addressed. "I remember taking on Harrow at Shove ha'penny. After half time they never saw the ball at all." This man promptly finished his drink and ordered another.

"We beat you at Pitch and Toss," piped out an elderly man, who claimed to be an old Rugbeian. "Why, we even took on a 'varsity team; Oxford, I think it was. Believe me, I passed the post first, before the other fellows were even half way."

"That's nothing," put in another, who had just joined the circle, and who was carrying his drink with a very unsteady hand. "I was in the Charterhouse Halma Eight before the First World War. We took on Haileybury and they actually ran away." This man, too, finished his drink and ordered another.

"You never saw a better cricket team than the one I played in at Marlborough fifty years ago," interjected another somewhat aged person, in between one or two hiccoughs. "We even took on a County side and I remember beating Derbyshire, easily. I converted two

tries myself, and in the last set we gave them a double balk to win by a canvas. Those were the days, I can assure you." So saying, he disposed of a more than usually large pink gin.

"I well remember taking on Roedean at poker many years ago," said a remarkably obese person trying to occupy a chair that was far too small for him, "they fielded a fellow at third man who played the 'tin-pot' convention. That didn't worry me. I doubled them five hearts in the last round to win by a neck. Make no mistake, those were the days. Men were men then." Having uttered this remark the gentleman in question half sank, half collapsed into his chair as he sipped some stout from the most enormous jug that the Prince had ever seen.

Just at that moment quite a young man joined the circle. He was clearly not quite so inebriated as the others, though by no means completely sober.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

When they all replied in the negative, he informed them that Cheltenham had just beaten Lancing at Ludo.

"My God!" said one of the old men, putting away a huge whisky and soda. "What are we coming to? Why, dammit, I would willingly play myself; I can still shoot a goal as well as anyone, at any rate no worse than these young fellows, now. If necessary, I would take my golf clubs out."

There was slight pause in the conversation at this stage and the Prince partook of his second whisky. He had observed the alcoholic nature of the company, and had politely refrained from accepting many of the drinks that had been offered to him. This, he noticed with pleasure, had not offended anyone. The condition of them all was such that nothing could very well offend them. So far as he could gather there seemed a unanimous opinion that the present generation of school boys, and young men generally, were no good for sport or anything at all. He also gathered that he was in the presence of persons all of whom had been to an academic establishment similar to Claydon's, a fact of which they were extremely proud. He was on the point of asking Pangloss what it was all about, when Pangloss himself tapped him on the shoulder

and suggested they had better be going.

As they got up, an old man, who was clearly in a more than usually fuddled condition, was heard arguing heatedly about a game of Tip and Run played against Uppingham, in which he, personally, had won the toss, and insisted in batting on the Surrey side.

"What does it all mean?" asked the Prince, as they walked up the stairs.

"Well, I will tell you," replied Pangloss. "These dear old men, and some of the young men, too, have all had a little too much to drink. As a result, they are slightly mixed up. I told you, they drink rather heavily in this club."

"So I can see," answered the Prince.

"Of course, you realize I am perfectly sober," emphasized Pangloss.

"Certainly," said the Prince. "So am I."

"That is admitted," continued Pangloss, holding firmly on to one of the rails at the side of the stairs. "The truth of it all is," he went on, "they are all thinking back to the old days, when they used to play various games and sports. You must not be unduly harsh on them."

By this time they had reached the club's main entrance, and the porter was endeavouring, as best he could, to summon a taxi-cab for them.

"You are quite all right, aren't you?" asked the Prince.

"Certainly," replied Pangloss, swaying about a good deal. It was quite clear to the Prince that it was time to bring the day's proceedings to an end.

"I suppose it all amounts to this," said the Prince, as they waited for a taxi-cab on the club steps. "One has to distinguish between cause and effect."

"What do you mean?" asked Pangloss.

"What I mean is this," answered the Prince. "The cause of it all is to be traced to what I saw at Claydon's this morning. The effect is what I have just seen in this club. Believe me, Pangloss, until I came to this country, I had no idea of the harm that can be done by education."

On that, they jumped into a taxi-cab and drove to the Prince's hotel.

CHAPTER X

THE PRINCE VISITS THE COUNTRY

PANGLOSS ARRIVED earlier than usual at the Prince's hotel on the next morning. The Prince was ready, and in fact, waiting for him with considerable eagerness.

"We are in luck's way," Pangloss told the Prince. "The weather is beautiful. That makes all the difference in the country."

They entered a taxi-cab and drove rapidly in the direction of one of the big London termini. It was only just after nine o'clock, and the streets were filled with people of both sexes and all ages coming to work. The Prince thought they all looked neat and well dressed. Moreover, many were laughing and joking to one another as they scrambled on and off buses and trams. The London population, at that hour in the morning, struck the Prince as being merry and easy going. In due course, they reached a big station, and this was literally crawling with people arriving from the suburbs and the country for their daily work.

While Pangloss made his way to the booking office to buy the tickets, the Prince surveyed the vast conglomeration of persons pouring into the town. He saw all types of English people from City men in top hats to clerks and typists. He found them interesting to watch, and would have liked to talk to some of them. His host, however, directed him towards a train standing at one of the platforms. Into this train they marched and settled themselves comfortably in a first class carriage, which was empty. Pangloss lit his pipe, and looked at his watch.

"We leave at nine fifteen," said Pangloss, "and should arrive at about eleven. That is excellent. We shall be able to stroll up to my uncle's house, which is about a mile and a half from the station. We are off now, I

think," he added.

He was right. The guard blew his whistle and the train drew out of the station towards that countryside of which the Prince had heard so much, and, as yet, had seen so little. For a while, Pangloss buried himself in a couple of newspapers, and said little. The Prince kept his eyes on the passing country, which he found fascinating. Gradually, the houses became less and less frequent, and in their places there emerged green fields and woods of varying shapes and sizes. Every now and again a small town appeared through which the train passed rapidly. Presently, Pangloss put down his papers and said, "We shall not be long, now, I think—probably only half an hour. The little station where we get out is quite small. It has a stationmaster, but he acts as porter and signalman as well."

They both looked out of the windows, and on all sides could be seen the rolling countryside, now at the height of its glory.

"It all looks lovely," remarked the Prince.

"It is," answered Pangloss.

After another ten minutes, the train began to slow up and the Prince was informed that they were arriving. The train, at long last, stopped, and they both got out.

The station was very small indeed. It was, in fact, no more than a halt. The one official, whose versatility Pangloss had already described, was waiting on the platform. He knew Pangloss well and greeted him with much cordiality. "They all know me here," said Pangloss to the Prince.

The official took their tickets, and they walked out of the station and into a road that led towards what appeared to be a small village, but half a mile away. The Prince looked at this village, which consisted of a cluster of houses grouped round a Norman church. At that distance he could see little more than the roofs of the houses, and the square tower of the church that was plainly visible. Even so, he realized he was about to see something that was very beautiful, and he paused a moment to look at it again. His companion saw what he was doing, and stopped also.

"We own most of this village," said Pangloss. "My

uncle is the owner of all the land you can see here, and most of the houses as well. His own house—perhaps I should say, our house—you cannot see. It is hidden by that belt of trees away to the right."

"Is that so?" said the Prince, looking in that direction. "And a very charming place it must be to live in, I am sure."

Pangloss suggested that they moved on. Accordingly, they proceeded along what was no more than a country lane.

"I know every tree, every stone, almost every blade of grass, here," remarked Pangloss, as they sauntered along. "It is for me my home, my real home, and I am never so well or happy as when I am here. I am deeply attached to my uncle, as you know; but when he is unfortunately no longer with us, my wife and I will reign here in his stead. My son will spend most of his youth here, as I did."

It so happened that Pangloss's village was at its very best. It was the time of year when Nature, after her winter slumber, is fully awake. Lilacs and laburnums were in full bloom, and as each cottage garden was passed these beautiful creations of Nature were to be seen covering many a wall and hanging over many a frontage. Other flowers, in immense profusion, adorned neat little lawns, and here and there, a fruit tree in full blossom produced a picture of variegated colour which the Prince thought was remarkably pretty. Along the side of the road were oaks of great age, copper beeches, and chestnut trees, in their spring foliage. On all sides birds were singing merrily and adding music to the spectacle. Some cows, in a near-by field, looking the picture of health, contentedly nibbled the grass as unaware of the great world as they were evidently indifferent to it. In a trim looking paddock some handsome horses gracefully raised their heads on the approach of the two travellers, and ambled leisurely towards a little river. As they came nearer the village, the few houses were observed to be picturesque in the extreme. Many had thatched roofs. All had quaint windows and doors. They seemed to nestle round the church like chicks round their mother. The church, itself, a stately Norman pile, rose up from the centre and diffused an atmosphere of noble serenity which affected all but the most stupid, who came

within its comforting ambit. It was plain to the most casual visitor that time, an unsolved equation, was of very little significance in the tranquil life of this small community. Quite obviously, the church had seen many summers and the houses many generations.

The Prince saw, for the first time in his life, a sight that is rarely equalled and never surpassed ; namely, an unspoilt English village in the heart of the country on an early June morning.

"It is charming," said the Prince. "Really charming," and he stopped a moment in his walk to drink in the scene. His peaceful reverie was disturbed by a loud shout from behind him.

"Hullo ! Mr. Pangloss," said a voice about twenty yards away.

They both turned round and discerned the figure of a man behind a wall, working in what appeared to be some sort of farmyard.

"Hullo, Mr. Pangloss," repeated the voice. "How be ye ? I haven't seen you for months."

Pangloss looked at the man and instantly recognized him.

"Ah," said Pangloss, "it's my old friend, George. I am very glad to see you again. How are you ?"

"Nicely, thank you," came the reply. "How's yourself ?"

Thereupon Pangloss and the Prince walked towards the individual who had addressed them to have some conversation with him. "Always talk to an agricultural labourer," muttered Pangloss, as they approached him. "They are highly intelligent."

Pangloss introduced the Prince to his old friend, who was occupied in heaving some manure from one side of the yard to the other.

"How are things in the village," asked Pangloss ?

"Fairly well, thank ye," answered George. "My brother has just had his appendix out ; old farmer Lutherford is as mean as he always was ; I tell ye, you can't get a turnip out of him without paying for it ; and as for Miss Shaw at the shop, her rheumatism is worse than ever ; apart from that, we are all well."

"Good," said Pangloss. "And how's your family?"

"My son," replied George, "he's just got married and's working about five miles from here. He married a very nice girl, thanks to me. I told him he'd better hurry up and catch her, otherwise he'd lose her. She was a rare one for dancing, she was. I expedited the wedding a bit. They 'ad been courting for two years, you know."

"I am sure that was very sensible of you," commented Pangloss. "I hope they are happy."

"They ought to be," said George. "There's a baby on the way."

"That is excellent," said Pangloss. "Is there any other news in the village?"

"There is nothing much," replied George, thinking hard. "Well, now I comes to think of it, there is something that might interest you. That youngish fellow, Wintersett, down at the upper river farm; he's not on speaking terms with the Vicar. No, and what's more, he won't come to church either. Shall I tell you why?"

"By all means," said Pangloss.

"Well, I'll tell ye. It is because he wasn't asked to sing in the anthem at Easter. But listen here, Mr. Pangloss. I don't altogether blame the Vicar. There's more in it than meets the eye."

"Is that so?" interjected Pangloss.

"Yes, there is," continued George. "Young Wintersett's wife has left him and he's got mixed up with another girl, at least, so I've heard. There is something fishy like going on, down at his farm. I saw a woman going in there, the other night, that I've never seen afore."

"How very remarkable," said Pangloss. "I cannot say I know Mr. Wintersett."

"No, you wouldn't know him. He has only been there a year or two. What's more, I don't think you would want to know him. He a'int much class. He comes from London, I think. It don't do for town fellers to go farming," added George, with an air of authority. Pangloss thought it wise to agree with his friend on this topic, and inquired if anything else had been happening in the neighbourhood.

"Well, as a matter of fact, there has been something

happening," continued George. " They actually had a political meeting in the village hall last week. Your uncle, from the big house, wouldn't go ; no more would I. It was to hear this new Labour candidate what's putting up for Parliament. Damn nonsense, I call it, to bring Politics down here. These politicians wouldn't do the work for us, would they, in spite of all the promises they make ? "

Pangloss was taken somewhat by surprise at this remark, and looked hard at the Prince as though requiring help. The Prince, however, who was highly entertained, displayed no intention whatever of intervening in what he regarded as a purely domestic affair. Pangloss, for want of something better to say, turned to his friend and said, " This parliamentary candidate has been making a lot of promises to you, has he ? "

" Not half," replied George. " I heard about it the day after. He has promised them the earth, if they will only vote for him at the next election. He told them that if the people will put his party in power, they will have everything for nothing out of the Government."

" What ! " interrupted Pangloss, in evident astonishment.

" Yes," continued George. " Bill Waters was there and repeated it to me, the next morning. He promised them houses, food, clothes, education for the children, pensions when you are too old to work, and God knows what else ; anything you like, in fact, all for nothing, out of the Government. Who is to do the work, I'm sure I don't know."

All three of them indulged in some hearty laughter at this stage, George himself laughing louder than the others.

" I see you are not a Communist," said the Prince, who thought it was now safe enough for him to join in the discussion.

" Sure, I'm not," answered George. " Why, look here. Supposing a couple of dozen of us in this yard all emptied our pockets and put everything we've got into a common pot. That's all right for them that puts in pretty near nothing, and takes out more than they put in. It ain't too good for the others, mind you. Anyhow, we

might all meet again in twelve months' time. I guarantee, by then, half of them would have boozed it all away. Now, do you see my meaning? Those fellows what had spent it all would want it all over again from them that had saved it.

"What you really mean," said Pangloss, "is that this common pool would need replenishing every now and again?"

"That's it," answered George. "And what's more, it is only them that work that are capable of filling it up again. Aye, and it would require a good many fillings, too. They wouldn't have my share. I like to keep what I've earned. And, what's more, I should like my son to have it, after I've gone."

"Quite right," said Pangloss. "Quite right. I am glad to see you do not believe all that these prospective members of Parliament tell you."

"Believe 'em," George almost shouted, "Why, they are a parcel of fools in that there Commons House. To start off with, they know nothing. I bet you none of them could do what I am doing now. I'm sorting out manure. Do you think they know the difference between good bad and best rotten manure?"

"I should think it is exceedingly unlikely," answered Pangloss. "To be quite candid with you, I am none too clear, myself, about the matter. Have you any ideas on this enthralling subject, Prince?"

The Prince replied in the negative. Whereupon, after much handshaking with George, together with further inquiries by Pangloss as to various other persons in the village, not excluding George's wife, who was reported in the best of health, Pangloss and the Prince walked onwards to the village.

"What an extraordinary man he was," said the Prince, after they had proceeded about fifty yards.

"Yes, that is so," said Pangloss. "I have known him all my life. He works for one of the farmers on our estate. He and I always get on well together."

"So it seems," replied the Prince. "I was surprised at his knowledge."

"I told you he was not such a fool as he looked. I tell you, Prince, that those who work on the land are extremely

intelligent. Some of them, even now, cannot read and write, and those who can, do it very badly. Even so, in many ways, they are not inferior to us. You should appreciate, Prince, that living in the fields all day long, they have much time in which to meditate, and above all, they are face to face with nature. That teaches them something."

The two of them strolled along, the Prince enjoying every minute. On all sides he saw the beauties of the countryside, every feature of which, no matter how small, contained something that was attractive. Presently they turned a corner and observed a man, about sixty years of age, walking in their direction. He had white hair, and was leaning heavily on a stick.

"Ah," said Pangloss, "this is old Graham. He is a regular character. You may, or may not, like him."

In a matter of minutes they were all level with one another and Pangloss and Graham greeted one another with great effusiveness.

"What a pleasure it is to see you again, Mr. Pangloss," said Graham. "I was only saying to the wife last night, that now summer has come, I thought we should be seeing you again."

Pangloss replied that he would most certainly be coming down as frequently as possible during the warm weather, and he hoped to meet Mr. and Mrs. Graham on numbers of occasions throughout the summer months. Mr. Graham tactfully reminded Pangloss that it was only in the summer that he would have the inestimable privilege of seeing Mrs. Graham, because that lady's ever-recurring arthritis kept her indoors throughout the winter.

"I thought your wife was much better," said Pangloss, in a tone of anxious inquiry.

"I am afraid she is not," answered Mr. Graham, "and what's more, she never will be, I'm thinking. At her age—she's turned sixty-five—it is most unlikely. Her own mother died at that age of the same complaint, you know."

Pangloss had to admit that he was unaware of that lady's demise as a result of such an unfortunate malady. None the less he did his best to cheer up Mr. Graham, who did not appear to want to be cheered up on this particular

topic. Pangloss, in consequence, put forward a delicate inquiry as to the progress of Mr. Graham's tomatoes, knowing that he was a market gardener in a small way and supplied most of the local inhabitants with that delicious commodity. Mr. Graham informed him that his tomatoes were doing well, so were all his vegetables, so were his chickens; everything, apparently was doing well, except one thing. Pangloss and the Prince both thought the one thing that might be going badly was Mrs. Graham's arthritis. That, however, was not the case.

"Then what is it that's the matter?" asked Pangloss.

"Well, I tell ye," said Mr. Graham. "It's the Parish Council. They've got the same motto as ever, that is, 'Let things be as they be.' I tell ye, I belong to the progressive party in the village. I don't hold with doing the same things as was ever done afore. I like progress."

Pangloss and the Prince both agreed with him on the point and began to question him as to any special matter or matters on which Mr. Graham thought that inadequate advancement had been made in the affairs of the village. Mr. Graham, however, became rather evasive. The most that could be got out of him was a reference to an un-repaired foot-bridge over the river, together with a vague criticism of a certain stile on a right of way through the village. This latter was full of nails and had torn his trousers, badly. Both of these were matters of public importance that had been wholly neglected by the Parish Council. Furthermore, Mr. Graham was willing to remind his two listeners, there was the scandalous incident of the cesspit. This not unimportant feature of the village was located half-way between Mr. Graham's house and the vicarage. It would appear that this cesspit was not functioning with that unobtrusive efficacy required of institutions of that kind, and according to Mr. Graham the Parish Council maintained the responsibility therefor fell on the shoulders of the County Council. The County Council denied this and passed the responsibility back to the Parish Council.

"Between the two of them, nothing is done at all," angrily concluded Mr. Graham. "How can we get on like this?" Beyond these matters he was not disposed to

specify any particular point in which the Parish Council had failed to display that progressive outlook and audacious pioneering spirit which he so much desired.

Pangloss came to the conclusion that Mr. Graham was in one of his general grouching moods for which he was well known. He, therefore, quietly nudged the Prince and they began to move on.

"I am sorry if we have disturbed you in your walk, Mr. Graham," said Mr. Pangloss. "Where might you be going?"

"Where am I going?" replied Mr. Graham, testily, "Why, I am going down to the 'Red Lion.' I tell ye, we old men need something to keep us going. I always go down, just about now. I've done it for the last thirty years, and I wouldn't miss it for anything. My health would suffer if I did."

With this, Mr. Graham somewhat abruptly closed the conversation and passed on to keep an appointment that for him was evidently a daily rite, never to be departed from under any circumstances whatsoever. The Prince and Pangloss were left standing in the road.

The Prince was much amused, and politely expressed the opinion that Mr. Graham would appear to be a very conservative person, at any rate in his private habits.

"He is not one of our most attractive inhabitants," remarked Pangloss, as they went along. "You must remember all sorts of people live in a village like this. That in point of fact, is one of its charms."

"I was going to ask you about the general run of the population in the country," remarked the Prince. "They seem to be different from those I have met hitherto."

There was a slight pause in the conversation. Pangloss stopped in his walk, surveyed the surrounding scene with an air of pride, cleared his throat, and looked the Prince straight in the face.

"Prince," said Pangloss, "You have seen very few of the members of our country population yet awhile. And, let me tell you, that short of long residence amongst them, you would never get to know them. When you do get to know them, you will learn to love them, with all their faults. Understand this, Prince; you will see in the

countryside of England a more diverse population than anywhere else. You will see all classes and all types. Here and there, you will see those who still own large estates. They are not unimportant, and when they are good, their contribution to the life of the country is most valuable. Then come families, like mine, who own small estates. We, too, try to do our duty in hundreds of ways, even if it only consists in attending church, and giving prizes for whist drives. Of the farmers, I would say this. There are big farmers and little farmers. Some own their farms, and some rent them. There are advantages and disadvantages in both, with which I will not trouble you, now. There is a large labouring class, and there is also an immense number of persons who live in the country for preference, but who work in a near-by town, or even in London, itself."

"They sound like a mixed bag," interrupted the Prince.

"They are," replied Pangloss, "but they are more than that. I am prepared to go farther. I tell you, Prince, that this variously assorted population possesses qualities of the highest order. To begin with, all are doing something. It is very rare to find someone who does nothing at all. Those who own property are putting up the money necessary to build houses and maintain them, that is, if they are not taxed. The farmers, of course, are farming, but even those who do not actually farm have all got an orchard or a garden producing something. In short, everyone is busy, and usually very busy."

"I should imagine they must be pretty prosperous," suggested the Prince.

"Well," answered Pangloss, "as to that, few of them lose money; if they do, they just give up, and someone else takes their place. Be that as it may, as a student of Political Science, Prince, you would encounter many things of interest if you chose to look carefully. You would find, for example, that everyone is tolerant of everyone else's opinions. You would find, also, that no one interferes with anyone else. You would realize also that what are sometimes referred to as class distinctions are almost completely absent. A noble duke and an agricultural labourer will

meet in a country lane and talk to one another with the utmost freedom on any subject they like. In my opinion, the countryside of England is more truly democratic than any other part of the world. It is true that you will find the same passions and the same jealousies, the same cliques, and the same friendships that dominate the great cities ; but they are tempered by fresh country air, and modified by common interests and common duties. Country sports, like cricket in the summer, and hunting and shooting in the winter, bring all together in common enjoyment, and play an excellent part in the life of the people. Moreover, they raise the character and preserve the health of all in a way that is never understood. Believe me, Prince, the real sportsman is not one who poses for the cameras of the society newspapers, but is one who goes in for it for the sheer fun of it all, and, incidentally, would rather lose a limb than hurt the feelings of a brother sportsman. You may take it from me, my dear Prince, that those who live in this glorious countryside, and know every hill and every wood, and, may I say, love every inch of it, are the true representatives of the real England, that glorious England of which you have heard so much, and which you now see for the first time. Let us take one thing only, namely, patriotism. It is axiomatic. It is inbred in them, from the great landowner to the humble cottager. They are always ready to defend the country when the call comes."

Pangloss paused a moment, and the Prince turned to him and said, " How do you account for this happy state of affairs ? "

" Well," answered Pangloss, " there are no doubt many reasons. I think one is this. In the country, over many years, we all get to know one another very well. We get to know who will speak to whom, and who will never speak to anyone ; who will help you in a difficulty, and who will not ; who will always give a subscription, and who never will ; who will participate in village affairs, and who never does. I tell you, Prince, human character is watched keenly and known very quickly in the countryside. One gets to know who is mean and who is generous ; whose dog is always savage ; whose cattle invariably stray, and whose never do ; who keeps his employees for a long while, and

who can never keep a man for more than a few months. It is not unlikely that it is soon known who is conservative and who is labour, and in certain circles, it is soon known who hunts, and who doesn't, and why he doesn't. There are certain other characteristics which are frequently noted. There are some people, for example, who are perpetually talking about other people's affairs, and invariably have all the gossip. They are by no means so unpopular as you might think. They are regarded as being generally useful, inasmuch as they can be relied on to supply any needed information. Lastly, it is very quickly known whether a person is safe to deal with ; that is the supreme test which the agriculturist applies to all and sundry. Strange though it may seem, everyone knows a good deal about everyone else. There is, what is sometimes called a ' bush telegraph.' News travels across the countryside with incredible speed and marvellous accuracy."

Pangloss stopped a moment and the Prince remarked, " If I may say so, people sound rather inquisitive here."

" That I admit," answered Pangloss, " is a possible fault. In the great world of London people get lost, as it were, in the crowd. Here, there is no crowd."

They walked on a few steps and reached the outskirts of the village. Pangloss suggested that they call on the Vicar, whom he knew very well. They turned towards a small drive that led up towards a house hidden in a plantation. Just as they were about to enter the drive, a middle-aged woman came out of a small house by the side of the road.

" This is Mrs. Sedgedown," said Pangloss. " She runs everything in the village."

Pangloss knew this lady well, and they began to converse with one another the moment she reached the little wicket-gate that separated her domain from the road.

" How are you, these days, Mrs. Sedgedown ? " said Pangloss, lightheartedly. " I hope you are well."

" I am better than I was," came the reply.

" Oh," said Pangloss. " I am sorry to hear you have been not too well. What has been the matter with you ? "

Mrs. Sedgedown whereupon informed her two visitors, with a very consequential air, that she had not been ill,

in the medical sense of that term, but rather that she had suffered certain affronts to her prestige in the course of the last few months. Pangloss became very sympathetic on hearing this sad news, and inquired tenderly what it was all about. Mrs. Sedgedown required a certain amount of coaxing, at this stage. In fact, it required all Pangloss's noted tact and conversational dexterity to induce her to divulge her great secret. At long last she blurted it out.

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Pangloss," she said. "During the winter months they had a dance and two whist drives, and not once was I asked to do anything. They didn't even ask me to pour out the tea at the second whist drive, although it was given to raise funds for the repairs of the church hall roof, and I always do everything for the church, as you know. Of course, I can't be slighted like that."

On hearing this, Pangloss evinced not only the utmost sympathy, but also a moderate measure of just indignation. He demanded to know who it was that had ousted Mrs. Sedgedown from her time-honoured functions. This piece of information he was quite unable to extract from the lady. All she would say was that a little clique of busybodies had got round the Vicar in recent months, and were running everything themselves.

"They are newcomers," she added in a tone as though that was of itself a criminal offence. Pangloss expressed the greatest sorrow at all this, and notified Mrs. Sedgedown that he would himself mention the matter to the Vicar, on whom he was about to pay a friendly call.

"Oh, you needn't do that," answered Mrs. Sedgedown. "It's all right now."

"Oh," said Pangloss, "I'm glad to hear it. What has happened?"

"Well, you see," continued Mrs. Sedgedown, "we are having the Flower Show next month on the recreation ground; and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Smith came to me yesterday and asked me to cut the sandwiches, and make some of the cakes. Of course, when two old friends like that ask me to do things for the village, I must."

Pangloss's face beamed all over. He complimented her on her good sense, and expressed the opinion that the cakes made by her would be as delicious as they always

were, and that any other services rendered by her would be universally appreciated. He added that in his opinion nobody else could possibly discharge these important functions as well as she could, and that, in plain language, the village really could not get on without her.

Mrs. Sedgedown was in complete agreement with this last remark, and after much handshaking and mutual compliments on both sides, the Prince and Pangloss continued their walk up the Vicarage drive.

"What did I tell you?" said Pangloss, when they were out of earshot. "You see here the world in miniature. That lady felt her dignity affronted and her position weakened in the circle in which she moves, so she just walked out on them. After a while, and I expect it was some while, her friends persuaded her to return to politics. You see, Prince, it is just the same as in the higher walks of life. Let me tell you, that he who is not familiar with the politics of a tiny village will never be familiar with the politics of the great world itself."

The Prince was much struck by this, and told Pangloss that he realized now why so many of England's great statesmen had emanated from the country.

"Quite so," answered Pangloss. "They learn their job in their own homes, on their own estates, in their own villages. Everything that is to be learnt about Political Science can be learnt from the rural life of England, and such knowledge may be acquired under very attractive conditions."

"So it would seem," agreed the Prince.

By now they had reached the top of the drive and the Prince saw in front of him a house of no great pretensions. It was neither large nor small. It probably possessed half-a-dozen bedrooms. The garden and the orchard at the back, partly visible, were clearly both of considerable size. A well-kept tennis court was in front of the house, and a gardener was to be seen, and heard, mowing a fair-sized lawn situated on the side of the house. There were unmistakable signs of comfort without extravagance, and it occurred to the Prince that he would not mind spending a holiday in such a house, himself.

"I must warn you," Pangloss casually mentioned,

as they approached the front door, "that the Vicar is rather eccentric."

"Oh, is that so?" said the Prince.

"Yes," continued Pangloss, in an undertone. "You must not mind what he says. He has said some odd things before now, even in the pulpit."

Having put the Prince on his guard, Pangloss boldly rang the bell. They were called upon to wait for a little while; in fact, it was necessary to ring the bell twice, before there was any sign of activity from the inside.

"The house is bigger than at first sight appears," said Pangloss. "They may be at the back of the building. By the way, I ought to tell you the Vicar's name. He is the Reverend Thomas Arthur Lovelock Denton, and he has been here for some years, now."

Pangloss was just about to ring the bell a third time, when the sound of locks being unlocked, and doors being opened was heard by both of them. Even then, there was some delay. Eventually, the door was opened by a sallow-complexioned maid.

Pangloss and the maid instantly recognized one another.

"I am glad to see you again," said the maid. "I did not know it was you, or I would have come earlier."

Pangloss replied that they had waited no more than a few minutes, and inquired if Mr. Denton was in.

"Oh, yes," said the maid, "he is in, and what's more, he is in the library now."

"Excellent," answered Pangloss. "Run and ask him if we can see him. Tell him I have brought a great friend of mine down from London."

"Certainly," said the maid, and disappeared on her errand.

The two of them advanced into the hall and the Prince was about to survey its rather queer contents, when a loud and distinctly jovial voice was heard from a room at the side of the hall.

"Come in, my dear boy, come in. I am delighted to see you," said the voice. So cordially invited, the Prince and Pangloss entered into the presence of the Vicar.

The Prince noticed that the room into which they had

been ushered was quite commodious. The walls were lined with book-shelves. By the side of the fire-place were two comfortable armchairs, and a sofa that was certainly not small. In the centre of the room was a writing table covered with papers and letters of all kinds. At this table was seated a little old man, with white hair, and a good-looking face, across which was the broadest and kindest of smiles.

"Come in," repeated the Vicar. "Come in. Why don't you visit us more frequently? we hardly ever see you now."

At this, Pangloss was compelled to give the Vicar a long explanation of why it was so inconvenient for him to come down more frequently. He and his wife were so frightfully busy in Town, what with one thing and another, Pangloss said, that it really was impossible to pay more than a very few visits to the village.

"You spend far too much time in London," said the Vicar. "I hate the place. It is stuffy and unhealthy. Besides, they are all wrong 'uns up there."

Pangloss ventured to dissent from so severe a criticism of the inhabitants of the great capital, and then introduced the Prince.

The Vicar showed much pleasure at meeting the Prince, and bade him a warm welcome to his house and to his parish. "You have come down just at the right time," said Mr. Denton. "The weather is lovely and the countryside is at its best."

The Prince, willingly and even enthusiastically, agreed with this, and expressed the opinion that the Vicar was lucky indeed to live in, and reign over, so beautiful a parish.

The Vicar, who was in a most genial mood, invited them to sit down, and offered them some cigarettes.

"You can have a glass of sherry, if you like," added the Vicar, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

The Prince and Pangloss both consented to this proposition, with a becoming absence of excessive keenness, and in due course, their hospitable host produced a decanter of wine, and some glasses.

"We will fill the glasses up to the very top," remarked

the Vicar, as he poured out the wine. "Only, drink it up quickly if one of the servants should come in, by any chance. We only fill the glasses half full when they are about." So saying, he dispensed alcoholic refreshment to his two guests, and partook of some himself.

The Prince was much refreshed, and having settled comfortably in an armchair, turned to the Vicar and said, "I am most grateful to you for your kind and hearty welcome. As you can realize, for me, what is colloquially called 'religion,' is something which my friend, Pangloss, would consider a controversial subject, and do not, please, imagine I would abuse your hospitality by mentioning it in any great detail. Allow me, however, to congratulate you on all the splendid services you undoubtedly discharge for your parishioners, year in, year out. I am sure they must be more than grateful to you. In some ways, I wish I had persons like you in my country. Your responsibilities as vicar must be heavy, and if I may say so, with all due respect, I should very much like to know something about them."

The Vicar smiled blandly, and promptly replied, "It is quite easy. I play bridge and tennis with the gentry; I leave the farmers alone; and I give them all a short, snappy, sermon on Sundays. That is the way to run this village."

Mr Denton paused a moment in his conversation, and finished a glass of sherry.

"As a matter of fact," he added, "we do not always have a sermon. I look round the pews, and if there is nobody much there, I dispense with that altogether. I should add, of course, we always have a collection."

The Prince was a little surprised at this, and confessed that he did not quite understand the delicate distinction between those who wanted, or possibly, needed, a sermon and those who didn't.

"Well, you see it is like this," explained Mr. Denton. "You have to know the people here. I know them well. Some go to sleep during the sermon, a fact of which I am fully aware, although they think I am not. It is when the congregation is chiefly made up of those people that we go without a sermon. Next Sunday, I may tell you, I am

going to give it them right and left."

"What?" said the Prince, quite failing to follow the trend of the Vicar's remarks. Pangloss did not improve the situation by fidgeting nervously in his chair.

"Yes," continued the Vicar, putting his hand on a bundle of papers lying on his table. "Here is my sermon for next Sunday. I am going to give it to them right and left. You have no idea what it is like to live in a country village, still less what it is like to be the vicar of one. There is far too much tittle-tattle going on. Far too much, I can assure you," he added, with no little emphasis.

"I should like to read you my sermon, but I will not trouble you with the whole of it. The text is, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'—a very necessary moral to drive home in a village like this." The Vicar paused for a moment and then continued.

"One of our best known and most respected parishioners, a certain Mrs. Cignett, is shortly to have a baby. It will be her third child. Her husband, a soldier in the army, has been away for some time, you know. Mischievous tongues have already started to make nice calculations as to the precise date of her husband's last leave. That, however, is something I know nothing about. The point is this. She lives some little distance from the village, and she is lonely, her husband being away. I go and visit her every now and again as part of my duties. Whether it is because I call on her rather late in the evening, or because I send her a few eggs occasionally, together with an onion or two, the fact remains the suggestion is being put about that I have been paying too much attention to her. I leave you to draw the inference that is being made. I tell you, Prince, that it is high time a sermon on this text was preached to this village."

Pangloss jumped up from his chair and commenced one of his eloquent pleadings with the Vicar, pointing out that there must be some serious misunderstanding. He reminded the Prince of Mr. Denton's long residence in the neighbourhood and his general popularity.

"Don't believe a word of this, Prince," said Pangloss. "Distortions of trifling incidents of this kind are common enough. It is one of the many difficulties with which a

person in Mr. Denton's position has to contend."

The Prince said he fully appreciated this, and added in an undertone to Pangloss that he thought very few people would go to sleep during next Sunday's sermon.

"I have to be very careful, what I do and where I go," continued the Vicar. "Now you understand why we only fill the sherry glasses half full if the servants should come in. The number of bottles of sherry I drink in a week would be all round the village in no time, unless I was circumspect. I adopt the same precautions when I have the churchwardens up here of an evening. I give them cider or lemonade. It is safer. I invariably receive one or more of the churchwardens every week, and we discuss any grave village matters that may have arisen."

"I should think that is interesting," remarked the Prince. "What topics come up for review, may I ask?"

"Well," continued the Vicar, "we have to discuss many things. I need hardly say I take my churchwardens entirely into my confidence. Last night, for example, when we had something in the nature of a general Parish Council assembled here, two points of no little difficulty and much importance cropped up. We require new surplices for the choir, and a fresh set of goal posts for the football ground. Both questions occupied a lot of time. Furthermore, certain purely personal matters in connection with the private lives of anyone in the parish may have to be considered. If any of the men lose their jobs through drinking too much, or getting mixed up with a girl, I like to know. Church expenses loom large on these occasions, and in that connection it is desirable to know whose rent is going up, and whose is going down; and who is making money, and who is losing it. I bear all that in mind when I ask for subscriptions to something or other. You observe, Prince, I am kept pretty busy."

The Prince replied that the activities in which Mr. Denton indulged, and which evidently occupied so much of his time, were not exactly what he expected. In the most polite manner he inquired as to the way in which Mr. Denton exercised spiritual jurisdiction over his flock, apart, altogether, he added, from the sermons he was accustomed to preach on Sunday mornings.

"As to that," answered the Vicar, "my eye is on them. Yes, I can assure you, my eye is on them. There was an illustration of that only last week. We have two girls in the village whom we call the 'pea' sisters, because they are as alike as two peas in a pod. You cannot tell one from the other, sometimes. Well, I was walking past their house the other evening. It must have been about eleven o'clock at night, and the lights were all on in the upper windows. You could see the figures of more than one person silhouetted against the blinds. That isn't the point. I have never heard so much laughing, joking, and giggling in all my life. Now, I may be only a country parson," added the Vicar, speaking with great deliberation, "but I think I know the ways of this wicked world all right. You won't tell me there wasn't a man about somewhere in that house, that night." The Vicar banged the table with his fist as he ended, as though to increase the effect of what he was saying.

By now, Pangloss was becoming more than usually agitated. In fact, he made signs to the Prince that he thought it was time they were going. The Prince, however, was by no means disposed to depart. He lit a cigarette and accepted his host's kind offer of another glass of sherry. As he drank the sherry, he delicately hinted that if these two young ladies, namely the 'pea' sisters, were entertaining one man, he was not quite clear in his own mind as to how far, if at all, their behaviour was open to any misinterpretation.

"You seem to imply," said the Prince, "that your tiny and, may I say, extremely beautiful village is a veritable Babylon of vice. I can hardly believe it."

"You don't know what would go on here if I did not keep them all up to the mark," replied the Vicar. "At least, I do my best. Now I will tell you something else. There is a girl in the village, Janet something or other, I have forgotten her name for the moment. At any rate, we think she is having a baby. She is unmarried, I fear. We are not absolutely certain about it yet awhile. We expect to have more information on the whole matter at our next meeting. It will be part of my duties to get the man to marry the girl, if it should be necessary."

"I hope you will succeed," said the Prince.

"Oh, I shall do it all right," answered the parson.

"A few words from me will do the trick. I keep a general look out on everything that goes on, you know. I will give you another instance of where I come in." Mr. Denton partook of another glass of sherry, and then continued, "There is old Jack Dennington down the road. He beats his wife. We think it is due to drink. I stop that by having his wife up here on Friday night to clean our silver. That is the night on which he draws his wages, and it is the best I can do for her."

The Prince expressed the opinion that that was a very practical remedy to apply. He hoped the Vicar would be similarly successful in that little difficulty.

"Another part of my duties," went on the Vicar, "is to know who is in love with whom, and who is not."

"What on earth does that mean?" asked the Prince.

"Well, it amounts to this. If any of the married couples in my village have a disagreement amongst themselves, and show signs of separating, I like to know why. You would be surprised how quickly I get to know if anything is wrong in that particular household, and the reason for it. Similarly, I like to know who is courting whom, and how it is going on. If a man visits a girl's house, or vice versa, and at what hour of the day or night the visit takes place; that, let me tell you, is something that comes within the scope of my duties. In short, I have to keep myself well informed as to what I can only describe as the 'ins' and 'outs' of the life of the village. It is most important for me to know that. You have no idea how useful and sometimes necessary such can be."

"It sounds to me," remarked the Prince, "as though your duties largely consist in keeping a sort of social register of the movements of everyone, or running a miniature intelligence service."

"As to that," said the Vicar, "I may tell you, at once, that my investigations, conducted very discreetly, are oppressive to no one. I sometimes have to tell the young men to keep off a certain young lady, and more frequently to tell the girls to keep off a particular man. I may add that I invariably interview the girls quite privately."

"I imagine that is one of the most pleasurable parts of your duties," added the Prince, with a good-natured smile, and finishing his glass of sherry.

"I must say the girls do seem to like being talked to by me," replied the Vicar. "I do not beat about the bush, I can assure you. They have to tell me every thing about their private lives, and I give it to them straight from the shoulder, if necessary. They can't deceive an old man like me."

There was a considerable pause in the conversation at this stage, the Vicar being enough of an advocate to let a good point, well made, go home. As a matter of fact, the Prince took a view of the matter quite other than what was either intended or expected. Whether it was due to the sherry, or the generally hospitable nature of his ecclesiastical host, to Pangloss's horror, the Prince suddenly displayed a weakness of character legitimate in ordinary human beings, but not usually associated with so august a personage as a royal Prince. With a more than usually broad smile on his face, a look in his eye which betokened that he, too, was a man, and yet another glass of sherry, he evinced no little curiosity as to what really took place when the Vicar interviewed the young ladies of his village in private.

By this time, Pangloss was nearly frantic.

"We shall be late for lunch at my uncle's house if we do not go soon," he informed the Prince. This remark had the desired effect, and they both rose from their chairs and moved in the direction of the door. Mr. Denton was reluctant to let them go. Pangloss, however, was insistent.

As they entered the hall on their way out, the Prince observed hunting crops and spurs hanging on the walls. He also noticed a brace of sporting guns and more than one fishing rod lying about.

"You are evidently fond of sport of all kinds, Mr. Denton," casually mentioned the Prince, as they reached the front door.

"Most certainly," answered the Vicar. "I have done a lot of hunting in my time."

"That's excellent, I am sure," said the Prince. "I wish I could be here in the winter to hunt with you."

The Vicar entirely agreed with this and expressed the

fervent hope that His Highness would come and visit them again. On that happy note they parted company with the Vicar.

Pangloss was much relieved when he was able to get the Prince away from the genial hospitality of Mr. Denton.

"You must not take him too seriously, you know," he said as they walked down the drive. "He is a grand fellow really. He is what we call a sporting parson."

"That is quite obvious," replied the Prince. "I am bound to say I liked him very much in his own peculiar way. I will tell you one thing, Pangloss. I should say that the weekly debates he holds about village matters are far more entertaining than the debates that take place in the House of Commons."

"That may be," answered Pangloss, rather annoyed. "There are two ways of looking at that. The debates in that latter and more famous establishment are not always brilliant. Be that as it may, we must really put our best foot forward, otherwise we shall be late."

So saying, Pangloss guided the Prince out of the vicarage drive into a country lane in the direction of his uncle's house. They had not taken more than a few steps before they reached a stile by the side of the road. On the other side of this stile was a little path leading over what was no more than a hillock. Beyond the hillock lay the church.

"We will go this way," said Pangloss. "It is shorter."

The Prince was accordingly directed over the stile and up the little hillock.

"This is a short cut to the main road which leads up to our house," explained Pangloss.

As they ascended the little hill the Prince became aware that a fine view of the surrounding countryside was unfolding itself with every step he took. When the summit was reached, he stopped and felt, as it were, that his breath was taken away by the splendour of the scene. Pangloss saw his friend stop, and he too tarried a moment or two.

"What a marvellous view," said the Prince, looking all round him. "I can see for miles in all directions."

"Yes, it is a marvellous sight, I admit, to look at the country from this little eminence," replied Pangloss. "As

you say, one can see so far and there is nothing ugly, ill-shaped, or inharmonious anywhere. You see in front of you the countryside of England in all its glory."

The Prince surveyed the spectacle as though it were a carpet of infinite beauty laid out in front of him. In the distance were to be seen some hills covered with a slight summer haze which in no way spoilt their appearance. More than one village, neat and pretty, showed its chimneys and its thatched roofs in different parts of the horizon. The Prince reflected that each one of the little communities was similar to the one through which he was now strolling. It would have its church, its parson, its farmers, and probably, its country gentlemen, like Pangloss's uncle, whom he was about to visit. Everywhere he saw woods, and trees, and green fields, and orchards, that must have been there for centuries, and whose every feature of simple loveliness and natural grandeur seemed to convey a message that he desired desperately to understand, but could not as yet clearly grasp.

"It is magnificent," said the Prince, admiring the whole great picture. "What does it mean?"

"I will tell you," replied Pangloss. "Ever since I have had the pleasure of meeting you, it has been both my duty, and my inclination, like my famous predecessor, to convince you that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. However, I know you well enough now to tell you that I am not unaware than in the world of human nature, there are many imperfections. Be that as it may, let me tell you there is another world, the world of Nature herself, which, on investigation, will prove itself to be, if not absolutely perfect, at least nearly so. It is not often realized how beautifully made, and how delicately equipped is the world of Nature. The deduction to be made from this remarkable state of affairs I leave to you."

Pangloss stopped a moment, smiled his kindest smile, and then continued.

"You see those rooks over there, Prince, do you not?" The Prince replied in the affirmative.

"We cannot do better than begin with them, because they are such a common feature in the life of the country," said Pangloss. "They make a lot of noise and some people

do not like them, but they do good. They kill grubs that would otherwise eat the seeds of the corn. Without them, there would be no cereal crops of any kind. For the matter of that, what do any birds do, and what use are they? They all do something, and each species has its use. Most of them keep down flies and various tiny insects of which we have little knowledge, but of which we should have far too much knowledge if there were no birds at all. All animals have a part to play."

Pangloss paused a moment, and they strolled on a few yards in the direction of the church.

"We will ignore domesticated animals because they are under the control of man. Take a look at those mole hills, Prince. Some harm is done by moles, I admit, but also much good; they drain the land. Take a look at all the bees darting from flower to flower. They are one of Nature's most brilliant creators. They carry pollen from the flower to the fruit blossoms and give us apples, pears, and plums. Have you ever heard of the badger, Prince? He is rarely seen, but he is none the less about. He eats a few eggs, but he destroys wasps' nests and prevents that animal from being too much in evidence. Have you seen a heron? He is one of the most graceful birds. He will eat trout fry, but also other fish, and preserves a balance in our ponds and streams. What of the worm, itself, accounted by man as ridiculous? He is most useful. He improves the soil, and provides many a breakfast for the birds. Even the owl, that nocturnal gentleman, is earning his living. He keeps down mice, and eats grubs that do harm to trees and barns. I could multiply these instances to infinity. You may take it from me that if a farmer loses his crops through some unknown or invisible insect, it is because there is a shortage of another."

Pangloss paused a moment, and imperceptibly they crept nearer and nearer to the church.

"Consider even snakes, which are by no means popular. The harmless grass snake feeds on field mice and frogs, and without them we should have too many of both. Take any animal you like, even invisible microbes, of which there are countless millions, or the largest flies; they are all fulfilling a function and without any one of them

“Mankind would at once encounter difficulties.”

Pangloss stopped, drew a long breath, and then they moved a few yards nearer to the church.

“Amongst other things,” continued Pangloss, “Nature provides many scavengers. There is the fox, for example. He destroys many wounded animals. You may think that is cruel, but that is Nature’s way of preventing the spread of infection ; a wounded bird that cannot fly, or a wounded rabbit that cannot run, will be disposed of by a fox. Hawks are another of Nature’s scavengers. They prevent an excess in the small bird population, and they also eat things like field mice. Wasps eat up rotten fruit. Rats eat up refuse of all kinds. The two together consume vast quantities of decayed matter that would otherwise do harm to someone or something. There are countless other scavengers of which we have little knowledge. Even the voracious pike, in the rivers, are important in this respect.”

Pangloss paused again, surveyed the countryside with a most contented air, and then they both walked a few more yards nearer the church.

“I assure you, Prince, in the vast mysterious kingdom of the animals, every single living thing, however small or big, has a duty to discharge. They are like the pieces in a jig-saw puzzle. If one is missing the puzzle is incomplete. Experience has shown, on more than one occasion, that to exterminate any one kind of animal is to create a dangerous excess of another.”

Pangloss stopped because they were now quite close to the church.

“For all I know,” he continued, “the vegetable world, the great world of trees and plants and flowers, may be just the same. Everything in nature is evenly balanced and perfectly arranged.”

At that moment they came to a little wicket gate that led into the churchyard. There was a pause in the conversation, and a cessation in their walk. The little church was immediately in front of them, and the Prince could not help looking at it face to face.

The Prince turned to Pangloss and, with a smile that betokened not merely enchantment but enlightenment, said, “I think I understand. Yes, I think I understand.”

"I am extremely sorry to have mentioned this matter to you," replied Pangloss; "but my tongue ran away with me. Come, let us walk very quickly, because my uncle will not like it if we are late."

At this, they both walked along the lane as fast as they could. They had not walked for long before they reached a white gate, by the side of which was a small lodge.

"Here we are," remarked Pangloss. "My uncle's gardener lives in that lodge. He has been with us for many years."

Pangloss pushed open the gate, and they began to walk up a drive similar to the one at the vicarage, only slightly longer. They walked through what might be described as a small park. Handsome trees were to be seen in all directions. Here and there was a little plantation. In one corner there were a few cows grazing. As they approached the house, the trees became thicker, and the Prince observed an immense quantity of rhododendron bushes. Pangloss told the Prince that the rhododendron plant was a very popular one at an English country house, by reason of its gorgeous colouring. All at once, the house became visible. They had turned a little corner in the drive, and the house was just in front of them.

It was a fairly large house, but not a mansion. It stood on a terrace, and commanded fine views of the countryside in more than one direction. The Prince judged that it possessed about a dozen bedrooms. In front of the house was a tennis lawn. On one side was a smaller lawn on which the Prince could dimly see some figures sitting at a table.

"My uncle, by the way," said Pangloss, "is a widower. It is probable that his daughter, my cousin, may be there. She is married and lives in London, but she often comes down. I should add that we are all on the best of terms."

By that time they had arrived at the front of the house, and Pangloss began to look round to see where his uncle was.

"Forgive me," said the Prince, "but as we came up the drive I think I saw somebody sitting on the lawn at the side of the house."

Pangloss looked in the direction indicated, and saw his uncle at once.

"Ah," said Pangloss, "he has got Colonel Heatherton with him. He is an old friend. Let us go and join them."

They strolled over to the lawn at the side of the house, and the Prince saw two men sitting at a table on which was a decanter of whisky and some siphons of soda. The older of the two men, who was clearly Pangloss's uncle, was quite short, and attired in breeches and gaiters. He was about seventy years of age, with some grey hair, but he looked remarkably well. The other man was tall and slim. He, too, was physically fit, in every sense of the term. Pangloss's uncle rose at once, as they crossed the lawn, and welcomed them both with feelings of obvious pleasure.

"My dear boy," he said to his nephew, "I thought you were never coming. What have you been doing with yourselves in the village?"

Pangloss explained that they had been delayed, amongst other things, by a call on the Vicar. The Prince was introduced to Colonel Heatherton, and they all sat down round the table. A tall chestnut tree spread its friendly branches over this table, and the Prince realized he was sitting in a most beautiful garden, under very comfortable conditions. His kindly host immediately offered him a whisky and soda. The Prince accepted this, but informed his new-found friend that he had already partaken of some sherry at the vicarage.

"That doesn't matter," said Pangloss's uncle. "I know the Vicar's sherry, well." Nothing further was said on this point, and the Prince was left to draw his own inference. They were all given a whisky and soda by their hospitable host, who then sat down in a large wicker chair.

"I am sure I am delighted to see you," said Pangloss's uncle. "I do hope you are having an enjoyable visit, and that my nephew is looking after you well."

The Prince replied that he had never had such an experience in his life, and that he was enjoying every minute of it. He added that Pangloss had looked after him perfectly from the very moment he had set foot on our shores.

"That is splendid," said Pangloss's uncle. "That is no more than I expected. If there is one tradition in our family of which we are proud, it is that of hospitality. Nobody ever comes to this house and goes away empty-handed. When you have to leave us sometime this afternoon, I hope you will take away a basket of strawberries."

At this point, Pangloss gave his uncle a brief account of the Prince's visit. Needless to say, one or two of the more unfortunate incidents were only casually mentioned. In fact, if Pangloss's version of the Prince's peregrinations was correct, the unofficial visit of His Highness had been a triumphant progress from the moment it had begun. The old man, knowing his nephew pretty well, listened to his vivid narrative with perfect courtesy, but some scepticism. At the end of it all, he turned to the Prince and said, "I expect you have had a lot of stuff and nonsense about the English pumped into you by all these people to whom you have been introduced."

The Prince answered that he did not think this was the case. He had seen a good deal of the country one way and another, he thought, and by now he considered he had gleaned a very fair impression of what England was like.

"Let me say at once," concluded the Prince, "that my most pleasurable experience has been to-day. I shall never forget this day in the country all my life. I have never seen such scenery anywhere in the world."

"That is very kind of you," replied Pangloss's uncle. "I think you are right. Although I am only a country gentleman, I have travelled a bit in my time, and I have never seen anything so beautiful as this part of the world, in summer. But, allow me to tell you this, Prince, "with all the official, and semi-official functions which you have been attending, I doubt if you have yet seen the real life of the people."

The Prince was inclined to demur at this, and intimated that on a certain number of occasions he thought he had become acquainted with the life of the people in a most marked degree. He asked his host for more information on this point.

"Well, well," said Pangloss's uncle, "I can only speak

really in respect of agricultural matters. I think I know the economics of agriculture as well as anyone. I must tell you, Prince, that all is not well in the countryside, in spite of all the signs of apparent prosperity that you see everywhere."

The Prince had something of a shock. Pangloss, himself, betrayed some nervousness.

"It is all the fault of the damn Government," remarked Colonel Heatherton. "They ruin everything they touch."

"I am afraid that is so," agreed Pangloss's uncle. "You should realize, Prince, that what we call the 'housing problem' has been confronting us with an ever-increasing acuteness for many years. Now a man must have a house in which to live, and in which to bring up a family. Moreover, the farmers must have men to work the farms. It follows, therefore, that without houses the farmers have no men, and that is exactly what is happening now. There is a shortage of labour, and also labour of the right sort, largely because we have no houses for them. It is a vicious circle."

"But I have seen houses and cottages everywhere, and most beautiful ones at that," answered the Prince. "I cannot follow you."

"There is an insufficient number of houses, and what is more, the existing ones are falling to pieces. If you looked inside, you would see walls crumbling, roofs defective, and windows in a very bad state," continued the old man. "You may well ask to whom to attribute this state of affairs. It is not the fault of those, invariably referred to as landlords. What is a landlord? A landlord, my dear Prince, is anyone who puts up a house with money he has saved. Now, you may care to know, that in England to-day there are an immense number of landlords of both sexes, all ages, and, what is more important, of all classes. In this very village there are at least a couple of dozen houses that have been built, and are owned by quite humble people. All honour to them, I say! That is just what is wanted. Middle and lower class property owners should constitute the bulk of the population, if only for the practical reason that they give stability to the country, as well as providing the houses for people to live in. That is

all very well ; but what do silly governments do ? I will tell you. Silly governments promptly tax a person who provides a house ; yes, Prince ; the moment anyone puts up a house, or owns a bit of land, he gets nothing but taxes, taxes, and still more taxes ; and then he is not allowed to leave it to his children, because Death Duties will descend on his estate like a thousand bricks. This has been going on for years. Can you wonder the people are not housed properly ? I assure you, Prince, that governments are crazy."

"They are not only crazy," interjected Colonel Heatherton, "They are a lot of rascals. The taxation now-a-days is downright thievery."

"Uncle gets very angry over this question," added Pangloss, as soothingly as he could. "You must remember, Prince, he is a landlord."

"I do get angry," said the old man. "Very angry, indeed. So would anyone in my position. What good does it do, I should like to know ? " So saying, he thumped the table with considerable energy. "I tell you, that unless governments treat us quite differently, there will soon be no landlords or farmers at all. Then, what happens ? "

The Prince was somewhat taken aback by this outburst.

"As well as taxes, we have tithes to pay," added Pangloss's uncle, with even greater heat. "And we are expected to keep our houses in a decent state of repair as well. I take it, Prince, that you will agree with us that fifty per cent of the lives of the people should revolve round their homes."

"Most certainly," replied the Prince. "I think I understand what you mean. If the people spend half their time working and half in leisure, the latter half is normally spent in their houses, and as such, they are all important."

"Exactly," answered the old man. "I don't care who it is, a person's life should be principally centred on his (or her) home. If that is good, everything else follows. You will have contentment, health, good work, and patriotism. We have always put up good houses here, and kept them up, but all we get for it now is taxation from

the Government, and insults from a lot of ignorant people who know nothing whatever about it. Most of the farmers now own their farms, and consequently they are getting all the troubles of landlords, in addition to everything else."

Pangloss's uncle helped his guests, and himself to another whisky and soda, and proceeded to stamp up and down the lawn in a most irate manner.

"It sounds most discouraging," remarked the Prince. "I am bound to say I sympathize with you. You paint an unhappy picture of the state of affairs. How do the farmers get on in this situation? They seem to have excellent crops."

"Of course they have," replied the old man. "You will never beat the English farmer anywhere in the world. That is not the point. So far as they are concerned, everything depends on the prices they receive for what they grow. Here, let me tell you, Prince, one encounters a positively ridiculous condition of things. At one time, agriculture is completely ignored and everything goes to pot; at another time, governments simply throw money at the farmers. Mind you, a good deal of it is taken back from them, in Income Tax. Anyhow, they never know from year to year, where they are."

"I should never have thought there were so many difficulties," said the Prince, in amazement.

"My uncle paints a gloomy picture," interposed Pangloss, "but it is not really so bad."

"Gloomy picture, indeed," said the old man, starting off again, "why, I have under-estimated it. It is much worse than I have told you. Half the trouble, Prince, is, that agriculture is run by a lot of fools in London, who have never done a day's work on a farm in their lives. They think the countryside is divided up into a few huge estates, hunted over by dukes. I have hunted all my life, but as far as I can remember, I have never seen a duke out hunting yet."

This remark was greeted with much good-natured laughter, in which the Prince joined.

"Perhaps you are living in hopes," said Pangloss to his uncle.

"If I were here in the winter," remarked the Prince,

"I should be delighted to come out hunting with you, and then you would see a Prince following the hounds."

The old man laughed heartily, and added, "We should be equally delighted to see you; but I must warn you of this. Your appearance in the hunting field would be the signal for all the newspaper reporters in the neighbourhood to descend on us like a pack of wolves. They would come armed with cameras, and would photograph you in most inconvenient circumstances."

"But, forgive my interrupting," said the Prince. "What possible circumstances could be inconvenient if I was enjoying the hospitality of the local hunt?"

"Oh," said Colonel Heatherton, "there would be numbers of occasions on which the damn journalists would snap you, and you might not like it. Roaring with laughter at one of the *risque* stories of the Master's wife, for example. Our present Master's wife tells some pretty broad stories and can use some language, I can tell you. Would you mind being photographed drinking an unusually large glass of cherry brandy?"

"Not a bit," replied the Prince.

"It has been known," went on the Colonel, "for some fellows to drink so much on hunting mornings that they get on one side of the horse and fall off the other."

"That would not happen with you, Prince, I am sure," said Pangloss's uncle. "Anyhow, if we killed a fox, with you out with us, the newspapers would say it had all been carefully arranged; and if we didn't kill a fox, the same newspapers would throw out dark hints that we could not hunt. Now do you understand the hopeless state of public opinion on agricultural matters?"

The Prince had to confess that he did not entirely follow the argument.

"I will tell you one thing," said the Colonel. "If you came out with us it would mean extra drinks all round at the meet, especially for the huntsmen. I think, also, we ought to tell the fox, the night before, to run a bit faster, out of compliment to you."

Everyone joined in the laughter, and Pangloss's uncle informed his guests that not only were they getting a long way from the point, but he thought it was time for lunch.

Accordingly, they all rose from their seats and walked into the house for lunch.

"I was expecting my daughter down to-day," casually mentioned the old man. "But unfortunately, she is not arriving until to-morrow. She will be sorry to have missed you."

"I also, am sorry not to meet her," replied the Prince. "Perhaps another time I may have that pleasure."

By now, they had reached the dining-room, and were invited to take their seats for lunch.

"Your own house is the best place in which to have a meal," said Pangloss's uncle, sitting down at the head of the table. "We know what we are eating, here; we produce it all ourselves."

The Prince soon discovered that this was not far wrong. Cold chicken, with delicious vegetables, followed by a gooseberry tart and cream, provided an excellent repast. Towards the end, when some brandy and cigars appeared, Pangloss turned to the Prince and said, "My uncle and I have many differences of opinion, always of the most friendly nature, I am glad to say."

"Certainly, my boy, certainly," said the old man, instantly. "Differences of opinion do no harm. I like to hear all sides you know."

"I don't know that I do like to hear all sides, as you call it," remarked Colonel Heatherton. "You can have a jolly sight too much of one side pitched at you, if you are not careful. Take all these communists and agitator fellows; they are shouting at us all day and half the night."

"Well, at any rate," continued Pangloss, "whatever my uncle says, I still think the heart of our people is sound."

"I am not sure of that," answered their host. "The hearts of some of our people are as sound as a bell, but there is a huge population in town and country, chiefly in the towns, of whom I am very doubtful indeed. There are too many people who want everything for nothing, without working or saving. The characters of many are deteriorating, and the economic difficulties with which we are faced will soon create a general collapse of all forms of morality. You cannot run a country by taxation and Government

interference in industry and agriculture. Under those conditions, the individual ceases to be an individual."

"I hope it is not so bad as all that," replied the Prince. "What do you say, Colonel Heatherton?"

The gallant Colonel, to the Prince's surprise, agreed with much that their host had said. "I don't think much of many of the people, now-a-days, I must say," he said, puffing at his cigar. "They spend far too much time listening to the wireless, because it saves them the trouble of thinking for themselves. Then they go to the cinema to get excitement, or to the greyhound races to pick up some money. When I was a youngster, everyone was much more resourceful, and incidentally, the quality of everything was extremely good. Look at the jam and bottled fruit that the agricultural population all made for themselves, years ago! Look at the home-made butter that we used to get! I can remember home-cured bacon. My God! It was good. To-day, we eat food out of tins. As for the new houses that are being put up, they are simply ugly. The furniture and interior decorations are worse. In my opinion, we are sliding downhill a hundred miles an hour."

"The Colonel is right, Prince," said Pangloss's uncle. "Be under no illusion. In spite of all that my nephew tells you, all is not well with our land. If it were left to me, I should suggest getting back to first principles. In this small village, it is my job to put up the capital, that is, to provide money for houses and buildings—from barns to pig-styes. I love doing it when I am not taxed and insulted. The farmer puts up the brains; that is, he provides the technical knowledge to work the farm. Labour should put up the labour. In that way, and given stable prices, you would see a prosperous agricultural industry. I dare say the same principles should apply to industry located in the big towns. At the present moment everything is in the melting pot, through the wild-cat schemes of doctrinaires, and cracked-brained governments, who work through an army of utterly useless officials."

Pangloss, who had been sitting quite quiet during this conversation, was about to reply, when the telephone bell rang in an adjoining room. Their host asked to be excused,

and departed at once. He re-appeared in a few minutes with the startling news that the message was for no less a person than the Prince himself. The old man explained that it was apparently the Manager of the Prince's hotel who was on the other end of the line. Pangloss immediately darted out of the room to take the message himself. He was away for some little time, during which the brandy was passed round again, and the Prince was offered another cigar.

When Pangloss eventually re-emerged, his face was somewhat pale.

"Prince," said Pangloss, speaking gravely, 'there is a telegram awaiting for you at your hotel. I gather it is from Major Smith, asking you to return at once.'

The Prince rose from the table, and with infinite politeness explained to his host that he must leave instantly. He thanked Pangloss's uncle most profusely for his charming hospitality, and expressed a thousand regrets at having to make so hurried a departure. His host was no less sad, so was Colonel Heatherton. They both, however, fully appreciated the urgency of the call and the old man disappeared to order his car to take them to the station.

In due course, the car arrived. They jumped in, hurriedly, and with much hand-shaking, and mutual expressions of hope that they might meet again soon, they drove off to the station on their way back to London.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRINCE RETURNS

PANGLOSS REMAINED with the Prince at his hotel until eleven o'clock, after their return from the country. They both hoped for some more news from Major Smith. None, however, came. All the Prince knew was contained in that gallant officer's wire, which said "Return at once, situation serious." Beyond that, nothing was known. When the Prince eventually went to bed, not unnaturally, he was in an uneasy condition. Pangloss promised to call on him in the morning before ten o'clock. In the meanwhile, all arrangements were made for the Prince's hurried departure. It was to be by air, so as to transport him back to his domain as quickly as possible.

Pangloss telephoned Sir James Footle during the evening. That gentleman expressed considerable pleasure at the prospect of the Prince leaving the country. A great load would be taken off his mind, and he would be able to get on with some other work. He did not specify what the work was, but instructed Pangloss to convey the compliments of His Majesty's Government to the Prince, together with a polite hint not to come again. Pangloss skilfully varied the latter part of the message.

The next morning, when Pangloss arrived at the hotel, he discovered the Prince sitting in the lounge reading a second, and much longer, telegram from Major Smith. This telegram had arrived in the early morning, and gave a much fuller and more comprehensive account of what was taking place in the Princely State of Patam Patam. Pangloss and the Prince pored over this lengthy communication, and no doubt was left in their minds that the situation was indeed very serious and required the Prince's speedy return. No insurrection by the people themselves had occurred. The Prince was certain that had not

happened because he looked after them well, and never interfered with their private lives and liberties, still less their property. Instead, what had taken place was something in the nature of a Cabinet Crisis. The trouble had all started with the Prime Minister. Taking advantage of the Prince's absence, this person had run out of the country, with a woman, not his wife, taking a fair amount of money with him as well. Seeing the Prime Minister getting away with it so easily, the Minister of Finances had disappeared also. He, however, had taken vast sums with him, and the State Treasury was virtually empty. This was the signal for a regular panic to set in amongst all the other Cabinet Ministers and high officials, and they, too, had disappeared in all directions, taking with them everything on which they could lay their greedy hands. For sometime the country had been without any government at all. Major Smith hinted that this had been the best part of the crisis. The People did not mind this in the least. They were left in comparative peace for a time. No taxes had been either imposed or collected. No speeches had been made. No laws had been passed, and the resulting spate of liberty, albeit temporary, had produced a marked improvement in the general economic condition of the country. Everyone had worked very hard, knowing he could keep what he earned and not have it taken from him by the Government—which did not exist. Moreover, the free flow of goods and services having been given full play, prices, both of persons and things, had found their own level, and quality was high. The people had suddenly become very selective in their buying. Unless price and quality were right, traders were left with everything they had bought, on their shelves. This happy state of affairs had not lasted long. Various groups of ambitious careerists seeing the seats of high office vacant, had made a dash for the capital. They had all lived in comparative obscurity hitherto, but on the chance of plunder, had suddenly appeared on the political stage. A lot of petty squabbling, and jockeying for places in the new Government had occurred, and eventually a set of men had installed themselves in office whom Major Smith described as being positively detestable. The Prime Minister was a quite

unknown man. He had been put there by the rest of the rascals because he was a weak sort of fellow, and in consequence, anyone could get anything out of him. The new Finance Minister had immediately imposed taxes without the consent of the taxed. This was causing a lot of trouble, and some of the people were asking where the money was going. The new Minister of Public Health had only recently been in a mad-house. The new Minister of Education could not read or write, and had said to a newspaper reporter, "What is education?" The new minister of Works, until his appointment, had been one of the registered unemployed. In his first speech he promised plenty of work for everyone, including himself. In clumsy language he had let it be known that his work would be to find work for all those who wanted work, by finding or inventing work for all those who had not got any work, or would not work, or could not find any work, or lost work when they had found it.

The new Foreign Secretary was quarelling violently with everyone, friends and foes alike. Moreover, he seemed to have vague ideas on Geography. He did not know where any country was except his own, and even of the precise limits of this he was uncertain. In addition, he had already done a fair amount of harm domestically. At a certain reception to the rather attenuated diplomatic corps accredited to the Prince's Court instead of saying to one of the ambassadors, "How do you do?" he had inadvertently said, "Who do you do?" The ambassador, mistakenly thinking he had encountered someone smarter than himself, packed his bags and walked out of the country on the very next day.

The new Minister of Justice, who was a confirmed drunkard, promised justice for everyone all right. He had asked, however, for a preposterous salary, intimating that if he didn't get it, he would soon find ways and means, in and about the law courts, of picking up all, and more than all, he wanted.

The new Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Communications, had completely vanished on the very day of his appointment. Search for him in all directions had failed to locate him. Not even his wife and family knew where

he was. With telephones getting out of order everywhere, increasing the inconvenience and confusion, Major Smith had decided to go out and look for him personally. After a lot of trouble he had tracked him down. All this man had done was to install one telephone in the house of his mistress.

The new Minister of the Interior was the only member of the Cabinet who had done any real work. He had been extremely busy from the moment of assuming office. He closed up night clubs; tried to stop people drinking too much in public and private houses; and filled the courts with prosecutions about matters of the most trivial kind. He had even prosecuted a man for building a house on his own land, with his own hands, to live in himself. The decision, however, that had caused most trouble was one to retain flogging for women, but to abolish it for men. This had caused intense bitterness throughout the country. Stormy meetings, addressed by angry men, were being held everywhere. This discrimination between the sexes had divided the country in a way never before experienced. The men's grievance was, that if the women were to be hit, so should they. Major Smith said that feeling was running so high on this controversial point that he feared not a civil, but a sex war. As this might well involve bloodshed; on his own responsibility, with the assistance of the ceremonial Guard—hurriedly re-called from leave—he had forcibly removed this Minister from office and had personally reversed all his decisions. He begged the Prince to support him in this action, adding that the sexes having been placed on an equal footing, so far as corporal punishment was concerned, passions had calmed down, tempers cooled, and the general outcry had largely subsided.

The new Minister of Agriculture had never been on a farm in his life. On being told by the Prime Minister to increase the production of live stock at all costs, he boldly addressed himself to the job. He issued orders to his staff that all animals, irrespective of age or sex, were to be artificially inseminated at once. His staff intimated that there might be difficulties in such a widespread course of action. He seemed to have replied that he would not be thwarted in that way, and that, anyhow, difficulties existed

to be overcome. Whereupon, he jumped into a car and dashed off to the countryside armed with all the appropriate scientific paraphernalia. He began on the first chickens he saw, which turned out to be cockerels. Nothing daunted, he tried to operate on a handsome gelding. This animal galloped all round the field and the Minister was unable to catch him. He then turned his attention to a near-by bull, who, not appreciating this queer mixture of science and matrimony, tossed him over a hedge and broke his neck. Major Smith added that nobody had taken much notice of the Minister of Agriculture's abrupt, if somewhat inglorious demise, and that the farmers were going on with their work in the ordinary way.

The new Chief of the Secret Police was a hell of a fellow. At various times in his exciting career he had been in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force ; he had also practised at the Bar, held more than one directorship, worked on a newspaper and even fiddled about on a farm. He seemed to possess that boundless versatility which all historians are agreed is one of the main marks of genius. On being appointed, he called his staff together and informed them that, in future, instead of working at politics which was exceedingly dull at the best of times, they were to devote all their energies to investigating the real life of the people. With this end in view he deftly planted a vast number of secret agents in innumerable private houses. These agents were required to send in reports of all they saw or heard and Major Smith had included at the end of his long telegram a fairly representative selection of these revealing missives. From these the Prince learnt some things that gave him more than one shock. He discovered that many of his adored subjects were given to wife beating, child cruelty, ill treatment of animals, excessive eating and drinking and all sorts of unmentionable horrors. With the lid off, the Prince, for the first time in his life, saw some of his people as they really were. He discovered, for example, that a certain Labour peer renowned for dullness and respectability was neither so dull nor so respectable as was popularly believed. The man in question had started his political career as a trade union agitator and had subsequently become a pillar of the Non-Conformist Church. Armed with this label of

eminent moral and social propriety he had wormed his way into Parliament. Quite recently, he had been raised to the peerage with a view of converting him away from Socialism towards a more orderly outlook on life. It now transpired that he was living with a woman to whom he was not married. Certain other highly placed persons in whom the Prince had hitherto placed implicit confidence turned out to have been born on the wrong side of the blanket and had themselves spawned more than one offspring of dubious, not to say, controversial origin. A noble peer was spotted by a more than usually alert secret agent, spending a week-end, in a quiet country hotel, with a well-known actress. Several Members of Parliament tipped for Cabinet rank were found out in illicit liaison with members of the fair sex. A woman Member of Parliament, notorious for her rather heavy speeches was discovered as a secret drug taker. A fairly large number of persons well known for entertaining lavishly and being apparently prosperous were revealed as earning their money by shady financial transactions on the quiet, company promoting, company wrecking, betting on a huge scale, and dealing in slum property at fantastic prices. High appointments of all kinds, and promotion in the Civil Service were disclosed as having been brought about by surreptitious wirepulling or even actual bribery. It was not called this by the Chief of the Secret Police but the Prince soon realized it amounted to that because whenever someone had got a good job through somebody's influence, that somebody expected something in return which he invariably got.

A press magnate, controlling a vast chain of newspapers, on whose words of wisdom every morning governments were made and unmade was found to be keeping at least two separate establishments for the accommodation of ladies. The Chief of the Secret Police, as befitting an intelligence officer, prided himself on his deductions, and commented that there was only one inference to be drawn from this state of affairs. As far as the Prince could gather, this man had unearthed scandals of various kinds in all classes of the community. Some of the business and professional classes were shown up in none too good a light. More than one business man, of the

highest repute, was caught out deep in the black market, and doing down other business men by sharp practices. Noted advocates and prominent solicitors were observed by the new Chief of the Secret Police to be up to all sorts of dirty little tricks to beat their opponents and make money for themselves. Eminent medical specialists were detected crabbing and disparaging professional colleagues to enhance their own prestige. Amongst the working classes there were reported perpetual drunkenness, dishonesty and petty thieving, cursing and swearing, refusal to work, street fighting and all sorts of subversive activity. Not all the members of the working class were living with their lawful spouses, by any means. The Prince was absolutely staggered at all this information. His feelings reached boiling point when he came across a small report concerning a certain lady whose acquaintance the Prince had been assiduously cultivating for some time. This lady came from a most excellent family and had been to an exceedingly expensive school where she had kept goal at hockey brilliantly and invariably topped the class in the sex talks. In point of fact, in his more romantic moments the Prince had thought of inviting her to become his wife and share his throne. The lady in question had emerged from the aforesaid highly exclusive academy for young ladies fluent in French, German and Italian. Her costly upbringing had been rounded off at an elaborate finishing establishment in Moscow where she had learned Russian. Her education had been completed with a short sojourn in Hollywood where she had mastered American. She had been vaccinated, inoculated, her blood group tested, and she had also been subjected to various other medical tests to ensure health and happiness. The Prince realized that all this had done more harm than good. The Chief of the Secret Police now informed the Prince that the lady had already had two illegitimate children, the father of one was known, but the father of the other was not. The Chief of the Secret Police stressed that he was employing all his art, and all his professional skill, all his varied talents, to say nothing of his best agents, to unravel this last named intriguing secret, but up to date he had lamentably failed. The Prince was as amazed as he was shocked.

"You see," he said to Pangloss, "when I meet my subjects on State occasions it really does appear as though everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, as you yourself would say. I am beginning to think that it is probably all dressed up for my benefit. What I cannot understand is why I have never heard of these things before."

"Well," replied Pangloss, "It is not unlike our own country. In a general political upheaval involving the whole nation, a good many things come out that otherwise would not."

There was another Minister whose rather restless activities had not improved the popularity of the government. Having nothing much to do, he had rushed through Parliament a bill providing for a census of the entire population. It was generally assumed, said Major Smith, that this was being done so that the government could find out who was who, where everyone was, and establish yet more control over the country. The Minister deluged the public with an enormous number of forms demanding from everyone a veritable mass of information about their private lives and business activities. As many of the people were disinclined to fill up the forms completely, and as many of the forms were rarely, if ever, read by the officials to whom they were remitted, a frightful mix-up had ensued. Unmarried persons of both sexes were recorded as having sundry children; married couples with children found their offspring listed as the progeny of others; divorced persons found themselves still legally married; some who were dead were recorded alive, and many very much alive persons were left out altogether as though presumed dead. In more than one instance men were recorded as women and women as men. In the result many of the Prince's subjects did not even know to which sex they belonged. The Prince thought he had better stop this at once and proposed telegraphing then and there, to that effect. Pangloss dissuaded him from doing this, reminding him that he was a constitutional monarch and that, as such, he could not interfere with an Act of Parliament, "a statute is a statute," Pangloss pointed out, "and Parliament in its infinite wisdom can do anything it likes. It can certainly legislate differentially for the sexes.

I admit, however, that it cannot make a man into a woman or a woman into a man."

"That may be," replied the Prince, "but I have heard it said that in your country Parliament can make a young man into an old woman pretty quickly."

Pangloss explained that the effect of a statute frequently was to make some things totally different to what, in fact, they were. He suggested that this minister's somewhat *maladroit* adventure into political science could await the Prince's return, when His Highness could put it right by his own personal investigations. Having regard to that old-world courtesy and exceptional charm of manner for which the Prince was so justly noted, those who thought or supposed or presumed they belonged to the gentle sex might not be averse to His Highness's own attention to settle the matter once and for all. Having disposed of any questions of doubt or difficulty concerning the fair sex, Pangloss argued, that, by the process of elimination everyone else would, *ipso facto*, be members of the male sex. In this way the difficulty would resolve itself largely by the Prince's own efforts and he would emerge therefrom with no little credit. The Prince appreciated the astuteness of this plan. Not only would he put the Minister in the shade, but in view of the unhappy termination of his one and only love affair the plan had possibilities in other directions.

Finally, there was a Minister without Portfolio who had caused a lot of trouble and expense. He was a noisy sort of man, and a rabid socialist, if not actual communist. He evidently regarded himself as the real mainspring of the Government, and had given himself the high-sounding title of "Archchancellor." He proceeded at once to assign everyone to a special class or rank, forbidding anyone to move in or out of his or her class or rank on pain of frightful punishment. Moreover, he made it perfectly clear that all those not belonging to the class to which, in his judgment, he belonged, were so much dirt—not worthy of liberty, or life, at all. He devised a marvellous scheme by which all the Prince's subjects were compelled to fill up forms containing all sorts of highly personal questions artfully designed to reveal everyone's position in life. These forms all found their way to the Archchancellor's office, thereby

giving jobs to a huge number of people. Most of the Prince's subjects neither knew, nor cared, to what class they belonged ; certainly not those who did the work and earned the living of the community. Even so, the Archchancellor encountered, not to say created, innumerable difficulties. One man, whose form was not, so it was said, filled up properly, was personally interrogated by the Archchancellor. It turned out that he was the grandson of a duke, at which the Archchancellor ordered him to be guillotined at once. The man pleaded piteously that, although he was the grandson of a duke, his mother had actually been a well-known shoplifter. Whereupon, the Archchancellor changed his mind and sent the man's name over to his Cabinet colleagues as one fit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, if that office should fall vacant. A certain quite young girl was similarly interrogated because she had refused to supply some highly personal details about herself. She said she was living with her parents, and only wanted to go away and have a cup of tea, not caring to what class she belonged. The Archchancellor was furious, and reprimanded her severely for not being class-conscious. All sorts of difficulties were occurring from this man's pernicious activities. In restaurants, hotels and similar places of public refreshment, nobody knew who to stand drinks to whom for fear of not belonging to the same class. In consequence, hospitality and personal friendships were being seriously interfered with. One alarming result of all this was that the revenue from taxes imposed on the sale of beer and spirits was dropping, much to the chagrin of the Minister of Finance. Major Smith pointed out that many people were not taking this Minister seriously, regarding him as an Arch-hypocrite, a mere silly snob who attached undue importance to rank. There was, however, a more sinister side to it all. Major Smith gave it as his personal opinion that this man's deliberate fomenting of a class war was really intended to put an end to all democratic government so that the Archchancellor could make a personal bid for the Dictatorship, while the Prince was absent.

Major Smith added that the remedy here was for the Prince to return promptly, and by his own presence amongst his people re-unite them all at one stroke.

There was another incident that had caused a lot of difficulty, as Major Smith reported. The Patam Patam wireless was accustomed to issue reports on the weather at regular intervals. These meteorological prognostications were supplied by a government department staffed by local, and sometimes, English, scientists. A certain professor of mathematics, with very left wing views, had got hold of this department, and promptly dismissed the whole staff, replacing them with scientific persons of his own political way of thought. A nice, merry party of mixed politics and science was being held in this building, Major Smith said. The bulletins were frequently inaccurate, and invariably couched in such scientific jargon that few could understand them. This had increased the irritation of everyone in a marked degree. A climax was reached one day, when the professor walked out of his office and encountered a more than usually intelligent working man. The working man, having accepted the morning forecast on the weather, was much muffled up, and wearing a big overcoat, to forestall the heavy rain and cold that had been prognosticated. Actually, it was a perfectly clear day and excessively hot. In consequence, the temper of the working man was not too good. On sighting the professor he shouted out, "Look here, guv'nor, an old farmer with his corns will soon tell the missus and me what the weather is going to be far better than you ever will."

The professor, a staunch advocate of the class war and equality of opportunity for all, was absolutely flabbergasted at being addressed in such a plain, blunt, forthright fashion by someone he regarded as being so much his social inferior. In mingled rage and astonishment he roared back, "Look here, my man, how dare you talk to me like that? To start off with, you are so ignorant you do not even know what the time is."

"Oh, yes, I do," said the working man; "it is nine o'clock in the morning."

"That is where you are wrong," replied the professor, contradictorily. "According to one theory it is only one o'clock yesterday afternoon; and according to another theory, it is about half-past five to-morrow."

"Do you know what the time is?" retorted the

working man, sharply. " Let me tell you I know when it is twelve o'clock, because that is the time for my pot of beer. What is more, you would know that, too, if you had to do my work."

Now it so happened, said Major Smith, that two police officers were closely observing this heated argument. Realizing that the working man belonged to the conservative party, and that a difference of political outlook might provoke a breach of the peace, these two police officers first turned their heads in another direction, and then disappeared completely. A loud noise, as though somebody were getting a sock in the jaw, had compelled them to return to the scene of the debate ; and they found the professor lying in the gutter much disconcerted, not to say, seriously injured. They picked him up and put him in a passing car, which eventually deposited him in a lunatic asylum ; where, apparently, he still was. Major Smith added that he was taking no action with regard to this department until the Prince had returned.

As the crisis got worse, not better, supplies of food became scarce. The Prime Minister, accordingly, appointed a Minister of Food, to ensure a fair share of food for everyone by controlling food. This Minister went at his job hammer and tongs. He controlled food so thoroughly that, after a while, very little of it reached the public at all. Furthermore, his controls were at once so effective and so widespread, that production was gradually being interfered with, and parts of the country were near starvation.

It was the same with houses. A grave shortage of houses occurred, and the Prime Minister specifically designated one member of the Cabinet to provide houses. This Cabinet Minister took himself very seriously, and issued an autocratic decree to the effect that no one was to build any houses but himself. The result of this was to make the housing shortage worse, not better, and many of the people had nowhere even in which to live.

Various lesser lights in the new Government had been disreputable journalists, semi-intellectuals, shady financiers, and street corner demagogues. All these persons had displayed no little energy in their respective spheres. Within a few hours of attaining office they had started

telling everyone what to do. Business men were told how to run their businesses, and farmers how to run their farms. It was in vain for the business men and farmers to inform the innumerable officials who descended on them that the methods proposed by the Government were all based on fallacious principles. The new Government promptly announced its intention of compelling everyone to work their businesses in ways the Government knew to be better than the people did themselves. Heavy fines, and even imprisonment, were introduced, to force everyone to do the wrong thing. The result of this was that an economic crisis of the gravest magnitude was gradually paralysing the entire country. The new Government had run into difficulties almost at once. Major Smith explained in a long, rather involved paragraph, that instead of getting on with the ordinary business of governments, the members of the Cabinet were quarrelling amongst themselves over the spoils.

The Prince paused in his reading and said to Pangloss, "I suppose you would regard the ordinary business of governments as being controversial?"

"Well," replied Pangloss, "even now, after many centuries of civilisation, and an immense amount of money spent on education, a good many people are not agreed on the precise functions of a government."

"Stuff and nonsense," answered the Prince. "I know what to do. In Home Affairs I maintain order; that is, I give security to persons and property; and in Foreign Affairs I keep out of war, if I can. That means I am always ready for war and, consequently, no one will attack me."

Pangloss opined the view that that would doubtless be a truly happy state of affairs. He ventured to add that certain other activities might reasonably be expected of a government, such as inspiration in Art and Learning, Industry and Agriculture, perhaps even Sport.

"Inspiration is required, Prince," he said. "May I suggest even Leadership?"

"I am quite sure of that," answered the Prince. "They get some of that from me."

Pangloss politely suggested that after His Highness's

sojourn in England, carefully chaperoned by Pangloss himself, the Prince might well give inspiration and leadership to his subjects in a far greater and better degree than heretofore.

"Now ~~that~~ really is controversial," said the Prince, and went on reading the telegram.

As far as the Prince could gather, the very embittered and essentially personal dispute over the spoils by the members of the new, and wholly unauthorized, Cabinet, amounted to this. Each fellow wanted more than the other fellow. Each Cabinet Minister demanded everything he could get for his own particular department; that meant, for himself; and nobody else got a look in anywhere. Inasmuch as the departing Minister of Finance had taken everything with him, there was nothing for anyone.

"I suppose," said Pangloss, "that means they will have to start all over again from first principles."

"I expect that is about right," said the Prince. "And what is more, this rotten gang will be as incapable of doing that as some of the politicians in this country. I admit it is difficult to start from scratch."

Having said that, he continued to read the telegram. Major Smith informed him that the army, consisting of a few under-manned regiments, together with the Ceremonial Guard, had wanted to take a hand in the game, but that had been prevented. Major Smith had taken the principal officers out to have a drink. That had put an effective end to any participation by the military in the *coup d'etat*. The Air Force, apparently had been another matter. Being a comparatively young Service, the Air Force wanted to be in the picture somehow. It consisted of some rather out-of-date aeroplanes, not all of which could leave the ground. It seemed that the crews of these machines had assembled in some mess to discuss the situation. Assisted by considerable quantities of alcoholic refreshment, the pilots and crews of the distinctly attenuated Patam Patam Air Force were unable to agree on which side, if any, they would join. After a very acrimonious debate, the gentlemen, whose aeroplanes were capable of taking the air, had decided to go out and bomb someone, somewhere. Accordingly, about three aeroplanes had been taken out of their

hangars, and started flying about. Some bombs had been dropped on a house of ill-fame, a borough council in a provincial town, discussing the rates, a law court of a kind, and a board of directors of some company in full session. Nobody had been hurt, Major Smith added with evident relief, for the practical reason that the bombs had not exploded.

The Prince took a different view of this, and expressed his regret that the bombs had not obliterated the Cabinet itself.

The attitude adopted by various other groups of persons towards the political upheaval was in some ways true to form, and in some ways, not. The lawyers, consisting of numbers of judges, magistrates, and members of the Bar of all shades of opinion, were sitting artfully on the fence. Clearly, they were waiting and watching to see which way the commotion went. Some of the more experienced of the lawyers were already at work finding out all sorts of well-founded reasons to support the winning side. The Police Force, having recently had their pay increase, had taken no side at all, and consequently might be regarded as loyal to everybody, and nobody. Placed in a somewhat difficult position, the police had done nothing at all, but had contented themselves with just looking on.

The members of the Medical Profession had regarded the proceedings with mild amusement. They had made a certain amount of money out of bandaging up cracked heads and broken arms, of which there were a good many. The biggest catch the learned doctors had brought off consisted in one of the members of the Cabinet itself. At one of the more than usually stormy meetings of this body a free fight had occurred, resulting in grave injury to a Minister. He was being accommodated in an elaborate and extremely expensive nursing home, where almost every medical practitioner in the capital was taking money from him for something or other. Ear Specialists, Throat Specialists, Heart Specialists, Lung Specialists, had all been called in, and had been paid their respective fees. The absence of a Brain Specialist was self-explanatory, the Prince thought.

The most dangerous feature of the whole affair, Major

Smith explained, was this. Being amateurs in politics, the members of the new Government had begun to issue decrees, ~~orders~~, and arbitrary enactments, that were frequently contradictory of one another, and were invariably ~~obscure~~ in their meaning. Some of these decrees did not say what they meant, and some did not mean what they were intended to say. In addition, to re-fill the empty Treasury, injurious taxes and interferences with liberty, were threatened from all quarters. Last, but not least, the new politicians had commenced delivering long speeches on every possible occasion. Some of these speeches had contained nothing at all except a lot of pompous platitudes, chiefly about liberty and the Patam way of life, which the members of the Government were clearly destroying in all directions. These speeches had made the people more confused than ever. Major Smith concluded by saying that unless the Prince returned quickly, and put an end to it all, there might really be a revolution.

"It is clear, I must leave at once," said the Prince, folding up the telegrams. "Not a moment must be lost."

"I entirely agree with you," replied Pangloss, adding, "It is plain that you will have plenty to do when you get back. If I may say so, after your visit here, you will have no difficulty in knowing what should be done. I have shown you everything."

The Prince rose from his chair, picked up one of his many bags, and looked hard at his friendly and hospitable companion, from whom he was shortly to be separated. It was obvious that the prospect of parting from Pangloss, after all they had been through together, was one that he did not altogether relish.

As they strolled across the hotel lounge, arm in arm, the Prince remarked, "Well, I don't know that what you say is correct. I admit I have learnt a lot of things in England. It is a country from which much may be learned, especially in Political Science. Even so, Pangloss, I cannot honestly say that, on that topic, you have told me anything that I did not know already."

To that Pangloss replied, "That's all very well, but, what you knew before you came here you had acquired from English traditions and English experience."

"I concede that that appreciation contains much truth in it," answered the Prince. "Be that as it may, in the tangled, and even chaotic, state of affairs now existing in Patam Patam, I have got to decide what to do in order to straighten it all out and restore order. If I allowed myself to be guided by your ideas and principles, I should be chiefly concerned in what not to do, rather than what to do. That would not get us far."

"I don't know about that," said Pangloss. "Many a man has gone far by simply knowing what not to do."

"I thought you would say something like that," replied the Prince. "Now, listen to me. The present difficulties, with which I am confronted, will not be solved in that way. Oh, dear me, no! I shall start off by sacking the whole damn lot of rogues and villains who have jettisoned themselves into high positions; and furthermore, I shall put as many of them in prison as I can, if only to stop them causing trouble again. After that is over, a little of the bold, daring, devil-may-care spirit of ancient days might well be the order of the day. You know what I mean, Pangloss, surely?" added the Prince, as he reached the front door.

Pangloss answered that he had vague ideas of what the Prince meant, but he doubted whether such a policy were entirely suitable to modern conditions.

"That is where I think you make a slight mistake," said the Prince, politely. "Modern conditions have been created by modern ideas, whose value, in our job, is very dubious. What is wanted is the old-fashioned adventurous spirit of not caring a damn about anyone or anything, so long as success is achieved. That is what built up your country and Empire in the past, and that is what I shall do on my return. However, I will think over the actual methods to be adopted on my way home."

By now, they had reached the entrance, and the Prince's personal servant was there, busy piling his bags into a waiting motor car. The head porter was much in evidence, chivying lesser individuals in all directions. An official from the office of the Air Line that was to convey the Prince, dashed up, breathless and hatless, to inform His Serene Highness that everything was ready for him at

The Air Port.

There were tears in the Prince's eyes as he shook hands with Pangloss.

"Good-bye, Pangloss," he said, as he very reluctantly entered the car. "Good-bye, and thank you so much for all your hospitality and kindness. I have enjoyed every minute of it."

"My dear Prince, it has been a pleasure," replied Pangloss. "I am sorry our association together has been so short."

"That is beyond all controversy," said the Prince, settling himself in the car. "There is one thing I would like to suggest. When I have settled all this nasty business at home, you and your charming wife, of whom I have seen far too little, must come and stay with me. Come and stay for six months. That should give me plenty of time to show you everything."

"I am sure we should be delighted," replied Pangloss.

"That is splendid," said the Prince. "I regard that as a definite arrangement, and I will let you know when the situation has calmed down."

Everything was now ready. The Prince's personal servant was sitting in front with the chauffeur, and all that was needed was the word from the Prince to move off. His Highness sat back, lit a cigarette, and was about to give that word, when he seemed to remember something.

"By the way," he said, turning to Pangloss, "if I get into serious difficulties, I will send for you and ask you to be my Prime Minister. How would you like that?"

The Prince did not wait for a reply, but signalled to the chauffeur, and the car drove off, leaving Pangloss standing on the hotel steps, somewhat bewildered.

And may we add; to elevate Pangloss to the high rank of Prime Minister, albeit of a tiny state, might well have been a kinder way of dealing with the original gentleman of that name, as created by M. Voltaire—to whom all due apologies are tendered.